

COMMUNAL ATTACK AT SASWAD

Report of the Fact Finding Committee

**Purandar Sadbhavana Manch
Saswad**

09183

9188

Community Health Cell

Library and Information Centre

367, "Srinivasa Nilaya"
Jakkasandra 1st Main,
1st Block, Koramangala,
BANGALORE - 560 034.

Phone : 553 15 18 / 552 53 72

e-mail : chc@sochara.org

COMMUNAL ATTACK AT SASWAD

Report of the Fact Finding Committee

Purandar Sadbhavana Manch
Saswad

First published in July 2005

By

Milind Chavan

Purandar Sadbhavana Manch

171/1, Saswad Jejuri Road,

Opp. Paper Mill, Girme Vasti,

Saswad 412 301.

Telephone Saswad (02115) 224638.

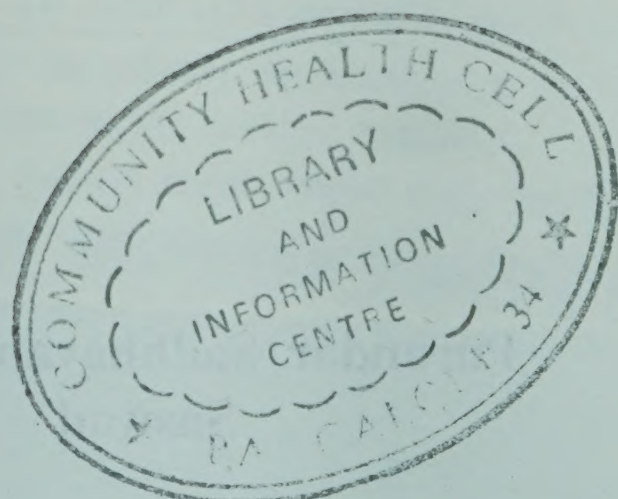
Pune (020) 26875871 / 26814889.

Contents of this booklet may be used for mass education and also may be reprinted for non-commercial use, without permission.

Printed at

Sitlai Udyog

Mumbai 400 058



SOS-220

09188 pos

Fact Finding Committee

R.P. Nene

Vilas Wagh

Yashwant Sumant

Lata Jadhav

Sandhya Gokhale

Compilation & Editing of Marathi Report

by

Milind Chavan and Anupama Pathak

English Translation

by

Ujwala Mahendale

Fact Finding Committee is Thankful to

**Manisha Gupte, Anwar Rajan, Razia Patel, Rinchin, Chatura,
Saba, Shiba, Tejani, Maya Nadar, Dr. Sadhana Natu and
Dr. Ramesh Avasthi for co-operation extended for
compilation and preparation of this report.**

CONTENTS

Part 1 : Fact Finding Report

Viewpoint	1
Important Conclusions	6
1 Saswad Gaon and Purandar Taluka	8
2 Nature of Hindu – Muslim Unity in Saswad Gaon	11
3 Incident of 7 th October : Its Context and Background	16
4 Analysis of the Communal Attack	33
5 Conclusions	37
Post Independence - Political Reality	37
Changing Political Situation After 1980	38
Hindutvisation	42
Hindutvikaran and Problems of Middle Level Castes	46
Inefficacy of the Intelligentsia	48
Annexure 1 : Maps	51
Annexure 2 : Annonymous Circular	53
Annexure 3 : Declaration by the Police	55
Annexure 4 : Persons Contacted by the Committee	56
Annexure 5 : Damage Caused by the Attack	57

Part 2 : For Peaceful Co-existence

Report of the Sadbhavana Yatra	61
Organizations Comprising the Purandar Sadbhavana Manch	70

Viewpoint

On the 7th of October 2001, livelihood sources of Muslims at Saswad were attacked. Shops owned by Muslims – Pann, tailoring, medicines, vessels, vehicles, were ravaged and burnt. Property damages were heavy but there was no loss of human life.

Any community indulging in communal acts of any sort, not only hinders the overall development of the total society, but it also regresses it. When this kind of violence occurs people naturally are more comfortable with their own religious identities and thus get divided in different groups accordingly. Both groups begin to view each other with suspicion. Actually all common people are struggling to somehow make both ends meet and improve their standard of living. Whenever there is communal tension, the process of ordinary people clinging to their own social or religious groups gets strengthened. Differences between the two communities emerge prominently and bitterness increases. In fact that is the sole objective of those unscrupulous and unethical leaders creating communal tensions. So instead of people's energies being spent on earning their livelihood, achieving cultural and social progress, they get spent on thoughts and discussions centering communalism thus resulting in anxiety. This leads to an unnecessary feeling of insecurity and fear among different sections of society. Basic issues like poverty, unemployment, drought, corruption, illiteracy, ill health, get ignored or sidetracked. Such a situation is advantageous to those in power because the social mood revolves around communalism, and the real issues are forgotten.. This is extremely convenient for the established social order to safeguard their vested interests. That is why all sections of society should think about and understand how of such communal attacks get politicized and the damages that ensure.

In India, whenever there have been incidents of such religious tensions or rather religious tensions were created resulting in violence, the government, voluntary organizations and agencies have tried to find the truth. These studies have revealed that most of the times religious fundamentalists interested in preserving the dominance of the established order were involved in creating these tensions. During the British regime the rulers were obviously interested in constantly providing a cause for friction between the Hindu and the Muslim communities. With this frame of reference it was necessary to interpret what happened at Saswad.

Some voluntary agencies and organizations working in the Purandar Taluka came together and held a meeting. What could have caused the incident, what precautions to take to prevent communal conflict in future and also how to ensure that the citizens do not fall prey to the vicious fundamentalist propaganda, were the topics discussed. The outcome of these meetings was the establishment of the Purandar Sadbhavana Manch with Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM), Kasturba Gandhi Rashtriya Smarak Trust, Samata Kalajagaran Manch, Helpo Foundation, Rashtra Seva Dal and Sane Gurujee Pratishthan, all working in the Purandar Taluka.

For the past or more 100 years Saswad has had no history of communal tensions. On the contrary just like any other city in India, in Saswad too, harmonious relations between ordinary Hindus and Muslims existed. Despite this positive social history, youth were provoked to plunder Muslims' property. During the meeting of the Purandar Sadbhavana Manch held on the 18th October, it was decided that attempts must be made to find out the reasons for these attacks, document them and make them open and accessible to the public. A Fact Finding Committee was appointed with the initiative of the Manch. Mr. R. P. Nene, senior socio-political analyst; Mr. Vilas Wagh, well-known activist of the Dalit Movement, Mr. Yashwant Sumant, Professor, Political Science Department, University of Poona, Ms. Lata Jadhav, lecturer, Marathi Department, Ness Wadia College, Pune and Ms. Sandhya Gokhale,

feminist activist were members of this Committee. All these members are active in the secular and progressive movements.

Committee members met some members of the families who were attacked in Saswad. They also visited those who had supposedly attacked or against whom complaints had been lodged, to hear their version of the story. Discussions were held with people not directly involved with the attack and also the elite. The Committee also met some government officials, journalists and political leaders. All the information gathered from these meetings has been briefly presented in this report. Whenever it was possible, to come to a concrete conclusion it has been stated in the report. Wherever it was not possible the Committee has tried to present the feelings and expressions of the people objectively and to make some predictions.

On the basis of the information gathered by the Fact Finding Committee, each member independently prepared his / her paper. All the papers were jointly discussed and a report was drafted with everyone's consent. One committee member, Ms. Sandhya Gokhale did not make her paper available to the Committee, hence her views and analysis could not be incorporated in the final report.

The Committee established with the objective of finding the truth and presenting it objectively was called the Fact Finding Committee. All the members of the Committee were in total agreement about the reasons which led to the incidents of 7th Oct. 04 at Saswad. But there wasn't a consensus about the broad purview of events explaining the national and international contexts, because it is very difficult to measure the exact impact of an international or national event on a local happening. Therefore it was only natural for the Committee members to have differences of opinion about the understanding of local events and their connection to international contexts. In addition to this report, every Committee member has the right to separately express his/her views. We believe that this will lead to a wide circulation and discussion of the original report and its analysis thus strengthening the purpose of

publishing this report in the first place. We also believe that if there is agreement about the values, then the differences of opinion about the details are in fact not damaging but are complementary to the democratic thought process.

The role of the Committee is that of a well-meaning researcher understanding the various dimensions of the incident, and suggesting what should be the society's role, the precautions to take at all levels to prevent people from becoming victims of the communal tensions. If the report is read with this perspective, then it will certainly be useful. Conclusions are normally published at the end of the report. Here we have purposely broken the tradition and have published the major conclusions right at the beginning. In our fast and hectic routines, we know that everyone may not find the time to read the report completely. So even if they read the conclusions of the report we would be satisfied for us. We hope readers will welcome this breaking of tradition. We feel that without becoming emotional, people should try to go beyond their mundane interests and look at such incidents. We all know that without political maturity, it is difficult to develop this broad perspective. We would be happy if this report proves to be useful in developing people's political understanding and maturity. Otherwise this too would be a mere addition to the many reports published. It would not be out of place to hope that this will not be the future of this report.

Last but not the least, the members of the Committee and the volunteers of the Purandar Sadbhavana Manch, despite being busy with their own jobs and responsibilities, worked very hard to put together this report. Citizens of Saswad, leaders of different political parties, organizations, police, officers of the revenue department, members of the attacked families, all responded positively by giving information and establishing an open and free dialogue. Without their co-operation, it would not have been possible to prepare this report. We are aware that they will not like the formality of "thanks-giving", however, we would like to express our gratitude for all that they have done. Despite having

different / diverse opinions, to set them aside for a broader issue, is really the core of any democratic system. Citizens of Saswad made us experience this humane gesture while collecting information for the report. Our fearless attitude is definitely dependent on the citizens' balanced and ethical perspective and, we end this prologue with the hope that it will always remain intact.

Manisha Gupte
Anvar Rajan
Milind Chavan

Important Conclusions

- 1 The attack on the minorities was carried out with the main aim of damaging their property. It was not a riot but it was a one-way attack.
- 2 In order to arouse feelings of anger and hatred among the majority, rumours were purposely spread. Considering this background, the attack appeared to be preplanned.
- 3 Impact of the propaganda of the Hindu fundamentalist organizations was responsible for this attack. The volunteers of these organizations provoked the youth by distributing anonymous circulars and making volatile speeches. They could achieve their target through the angry and provoked youth and yet remain totally out of picture. Some of the youth who actually participated in the attack were not affiliated to any political party and some even related to secular parties.
- 4 After the attack, it was announced that the victims of the minority section would be given some economic aid. Police took the initiative and offered one day's salary as their contribution. Despite this ideal action taken by the police force, the victims of the attack failed to receive much aid even on humanitarian grounds. This could be due to the (unexpressed) terror created in the minds of the majority by those engaged in orchestrating the communal attack.
- 5 Municipal Council elections were soon to be held. 'Why lose votes of the majority by publicly condemning the attack?' could be the political calculations of the concerned party leaders. In effect, the political leadership failed in its duties. It neither publicly condemned

the communal attack immediately, nor did it gear up its system to collect sufficient funds to help the victims.

- 6 Police, journalists, leaders of political parties, volunteers and ordinary citizens, nobody had ever thought, such an incident could take place. These different social groups, in a way failed to grasp the changing social mood. Leaders who have an impact on the Taluka but their apathy at the local level, points to the same fact. They could not grasp the changing social environment.
- 7 Some suspected accused of this case had contested the Corporation elections. The ones who represented the Hindutva parties lost the elections. Religious fundamentalist parties had actually never enjoyed a footing in the Purandar Taluka. It is sad to note that before and during the incident, majority of the citizens of Saswad had fallen prey to the communal and Hindu fundamental spirit instilled in them so systematically.

Saswad Gaon and Purandar Taluka

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Saswad is a major city of Purandar Taluka, which is 30 kms. away from Pune. As per the 1991 census, there were 108 cities in the Taluka which is located at a height of 2800 ft from sea level. Area of Saswad city is 22.50 sq. kms. As per the 1991 census the population of Saswad was 19,536 and the number of families were 3,749.

There are interesting stories as to how the city got its name. There were supposedly six vastis, vadis (hamlets) and hence the name Saswad. The other story tells us of seven huge Vad trees in Saswad so instead of Satwad, it got mispronounced as Saswad.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Purandar and Vajragad are the two historical forts located in the Purandar Taluka. Khandoba, chief idol of Maharashtra at Jejuri and the Bhuleshwar temple and caves are famous.

Purandar Taluka was of importance during King Shivaji's regime and also the Peshwas. Purandar was one of the important forts in possession of King Shivaji, where his son Sambhaji was born. Saswad acquired importance because of the fort, as it is only 11 km away from it. Saswad is located at the meeting point of Karha and Chambli Rivers. Saint Sopandev, younger brother of the well-known Marathi Saint Dnyaneshwar, went into deep meditation and took Samadhi on the bank of the Chambli. That time Saswad was called Kshetra Sanvastar and Chambli was called Bhogavati. These references are found in the

devotional poems of Saint Namdeo. Every year in the month of November / December (Margsheersha) a religious fair takes place in memory of Saint Namdeo for which thousands of pilgrims from all over Maharashtra assemble at Saswad. Along with Saint Sopandeo's temple, Sangameshwar, Siddheshwar Kshetrapal Bhairavnath, Budhkar Ram Mandir, Changavateshwar, Bhutya Teli are some of the big and small temples in and around Saswad. This is one of the reasons why Saswad has always enjoyed prominence in the religious realm of Maharashtra.

Besides being a place of pilgrimage and Saints, in the regime of King Shivaji, it was a well known military base. The first Peshwa - Balaji Vishwanath Bhat used to reside at Saswad. During the Peshwa rule, 52 warriors were residing in their own palaces at Saswad. Thus Saswad enjoyed both religious and the warrior traditions.

During the British rule, Saswad was recognized one of the 13 major cities in Pune district. Modernization of Saswad began at a slow pace after the British started ruling India. Marathi primary education started being imparted in 1839. The A V school which was opened in 1906 in the Purandar Wada is today Maharashtra Education Society's school with its own building and independent premises. Today there are seven Municipal Council schools in Saswad, plus one private secondary school, one junior and one senior college. There is neither an Urdu medium school in Saswad nor any traditional Madarsa.

Famous Marathi literate Pralhad Keshav Atre was born in Saswad. Similarly well-known (sister) singers, Prabha and Usha Atre are also from Purandar Taluka. Prematai Kantak of Satyagrahi Maharashtra was also very active at Saswad.

The Saswad Gaon and Purandar Taluka were actively involved in the earlier uprising and later revolt against the British Empire. The fight against the foreign rule under the gallant leadership of Umaji Naik of Purandar was a memorable one.

After independence too, Saswad continues to function as an important center of the Purandar Taluka.

SASWAD CITY AND ITS LAYOUT

The old part of the city is divided on the basis of castes. However, as the city started developing big housing schemes like HUDCO were constructed where one does not find division of houses on a rigid caste basis.

The lanes in Saswad are Shimpi Ali, Sali Ali, Brahman Ali, Bagwan Ali, Chambhar Ali, Girme Ali, Dalvi Ali, Mali Ali, Jagtap Ali, Boravake Ali, Saraf Ali, Botre Ali, etc. The caste based division no longer exists but the old names still continue.

Majority of Muslim houses are in the Bagwan lane. There are around 140 Muslim families at Saswad.

Ashoknagar, Sathenagar and Indiranagar are the recently developed areas of Saswad. People from all castes stay at Indiranagar in the east. Maratha and Dalit communities stay at Ashoknagar behind the Waghire High School. Sathenagar is located on the road to Bhuleshwar and people from Balutedar castes stay there. Lamanis and Ramoshis stay at Khandoba Mal and Naik vasti respectively.

At Jejuri M.I.D.C. has developed its industrial sector but Saswad has not industrialized to that extent. Marathas and Mali communities are engaged mainly in agriculture. Vegetables grown here are supplied to Pune & Mumbai markets. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, lecturers, bank employees, government employees, etc comprising the educated middle class have their impact on the city. But modernization of this class has perhaps been only external, only in terms of dressing, diet, and entertainment activities.

□□□

Nature of the Hindu-Muslim Unity at Saswad

TRADITION OF SASWAD

Just like in any other city in Saswad too, there is no hatred between the Hindu and the Muslim communities. The situation is similar in other towns in the Purandar Taluka. Actually this is the situation existing in rural India. In Purandar Taluka it is difficult to differentiate between Hindus and Muslims, especially among the men on basis of language and dress. The kind of Marathi with that typical rural accent which Hindus speak, is spoken by the Muslims too. Muslims amongst themselves speak a mixture of Hindi and Marathi. Every year in the month of Chaitra (March – April), the Bhairavnath Fare is held at Saswad. Right from collecting the contribution to organizing the fair, the traditional ‘Kusti; (traditional Wrestling Maharashtrian game played by strong, muscled men), there is equal participation by Muslims and Hindus. Every year, the Vari (famous pilgrimage of Maharashtra) going from Alandi to Pandharpur goes via Saswad. Muslims too along with the Hindus are busy welcoming the pilgrims at Saswad and looking after them. The honour of Mulanki (sacrificing the goat) is always with the Muslim community in rural areas. In this part of Maharashtra, Muslim families are considered as Balutedars (the 12 traditional professions of any village). Money lending is with the Hindus or Jain Marwari families. The smooth running of the village economy is dependant on the co-operation of people belonging to different religions and castes. At village Bhivadi near Saswad, a Muslim family observes the Mahashivaratri fast (traditionally a Hindu ritual in worship of Lord Shiva). Similarly, at Dargas (a place of worship of Muslims),

many Hindus cover the Darga with a Chadar (a ritual performed by the Muslims).

Hindus participate in the festivals of Muslims. During Moharam the honour of carrying the Taboot on their shoulders goes to some Hindu castes like Man, Chavale, Bhongale, Kupare. During the same festival, Hindu families have been supplying the sacred cereal for the Taboot and Muslims in turn have been sending the Roat as the sacred offering of the Taboot to the Hindus.

In the Bagwan Lane of Saswad where majority of the Muslims live, a Hindu corporator was elected. In the Shimpi Lane dominated by Hindu residents, a Muslim corporator was elected in Saswad. From this political and social profile, we can conclude that tension filled social or political differences between the Hindus and Muslims never really existed at Saswad.

IMPACT OF PROGRESSIVE IDEAS

Activists from the Satyashodhak Movement led by Mahatma Phule tried to propagate progressive thoughts and ideas at Saswad during the Colonial era. There existed different water filling points on the bank of the river Karha for different castes. The Satyashodhak Movement protested against this practice and broke it down. Rebellion against the discrimination based on the basis of the caste system, eating and entering the temples with the so-called 'untouchables'; conducting marriage ceremonies without the supervision of Brahmin priests, propagating women's education, critical analysis of inhuman religious customs, adult literacy were some of the social programmes, which these activists took up at Saswad. Their efforts had inherent limitations but nevertheless, it was a valiant effort in those days.

Saswad also witnessed the impact of the national freedom struggle. Leaders like Acharya Bhagwat, Shankarrao Dev, Prematai Kantak, S.M. Joshi, Nanasaheb Gore and other socialist leaders were often in and around

Saswad. The political leadership of Saswad in the pre-independence era remained largely with the Congress or with parties, which grew from the Congress tradition. A local self-government institution like the Municipal Council, which is more than 125 years old, schools, Rashtra Seva Dal and other organizations always propagated progressive thoughts and values Saswad. Despite this, the world new of the majority, remained traditional. May be this was because the area was not sufficiently developed industrially to absorb the progressive thoughts and ideas. Though different castes and the profession-based families like Maratha, Mali, Wani, Brahmin, Mahar, Mang, Chambhar, Shimpi, Marwadi, Muslim co-existed, there never was no real communication among them. Interactions were always guided and restricted by the caste system's customs and traditions. Settlements in the city were on the basis of castes. The names of lanes like Bagwan, Shimpi, Brahmin lanes bear testimony to this. Each caste had its own superior/inferior, higher/lower ranking in the social hierarchy. There was no particular reason for competition and conflict between the castes as people operated within the limits drawn by their own caste spheres. As the city was not industrialized the competitive spirit, characteristic of the modern culture did not develop. Lack of conflict and competition was interpreted by the traditional mindset as peaceful co-existence, social unity, inter-caste understanding and inter-religious tolerance.

Though the impact of organizations like the Rashtra Seva Dal, committed to propagating progressive thinking and action, in and around Saswad is not profound many of them are working to the best of their ability. Even today many individuals & organizations committed to progressive ideas are to be found in the Purandar Taluka.

The number of citizens voting for the Congress or the Janata Dal has always been large in this area. Political parties openly supporting religious fanaticism have never won in the Municipal Council, Panchayat Samiti, Zilla Parishad or Assembly elections. But even then it cannot be said that the progressive values like secularism, equality, social justice

have taken root here. Congress or Janata Dal candidates are getting elected because of their individual influence and that too on the basis of caste. These elected political leaders have not made any concrete efforts towards propagating the progressive ideals laid down in our Constitution amongst their party workers and also the masses.

It can thus be observed that the people of this Taluka have been introduced to and have been influenced to some extent by the Pilgrimage, Satyashokhak Movements, Freedom struggle and the ideology of democracy and equality. But the mindset has not been freed from the conservative thinking of the middle ages.

A majority of the residents of Saswad are farmers. One third of the Taluka is drought-prone. No cash crops can be grown except for vegetables. The traditional money lending profession is with the Marwadi community. The white-collared middle class though scattered in educational institutions, courts, government offices, co-operatives, banks, has very little impact on the traditional society divided in different castes. And as mentioned above this educated class also has not accepted modern, progressive values completely .

Muslims have been residing at Saswad right from the days of Aadilshahi. A Mosque built in the Aadilshahi period and style and another one which was built later on, are testimony to the Muslim inhabitants at Saswad, for the past four centuries. A majority of Muslims belong to the lower middle class, are into small-scale businesses like selling of fruits, fish, Gulal and Bukka (red and black powders used in religious rituals respectively), Bangadi (chudi), etc, and bakery products. Rarely does one comes across a Muslim owning a medicine or a vessel shop. Divided into castes on the basis of professions like Shikalgar, Aattar, Tamboli, Bagwan, the Muslims of Saswad do not comprise more than 5% of the total population. This educationally backward class hardly ever active in the political sphere was never in competition with the majority, Hindus either economically or politically. Majority of them are

engaged in earning their livelihood and are always interested in living peacefully, adjusting with the mainstream Hindu population. So there was really no challenge, threat, competition from them to the Hindus and thus relations between the Hindus and Muslims were harmonious based on mutual co-operation.

A reflection of these was seen in many religious / social activities of Saswad. The custom of Baang at mosques was always there but it never invited controversies or trouble. There is no Madarsa or even an Urdu medium school at Saswad. In 1976 loudspeakers were set up for the first time at the mosques for the Baang. This was the very first attempt of a minority community to establish its different cultural and religious identity. But barring this exception there were no other visible traits, differentiating the Muslims from the Hindus at Saswad. Though the unity between them was the result of a healthy interaction within the religion and caste limits, it was never merely symbolic, or token value or casual. Within its limits it was genuine, honest and so far had not been touched by populism. It was truly an expression of the symbiotic tradition of the Indian middle ages. The communal attack on the minority on the 7th October 2001 destroyed the very fabric of this social unity. It was shocking and unexpected but not totally incomprehensible. If the events taking place at the national / international and local levels are studied, the meaning of the Saswad incident can then be understood within those macro frameworks.

□□□

Incident of 7th October 2001 ***Its Context and Background***

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

On the 11th of September 2001, terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in USA. It was being discussed across the globe that Osama Bin Laden is the mastermind behind these devastating attacks in which hundreds of people lost their lives. It was being portrayed at the international level that this was a conflict between the Islamic and the progressive Christian civilizations. Strategically, America declared that this conflict was not against Islam to sooth the initial anti-Islam reaction. Despite this, the anger against Muslims was getting expressed in several ways in America and the media was spreading it to the rest of the world.

NATIONAL EVENTS

Osama Bin Laden was given political asylum by Afghanistan where the Talibanis had captured power and incidents of destroying the statue of Bud'ha had occurred. After this, America declared war against Afghanistan. The Imam of the Jama Masjid at Delhi then appealed to all the Muslims to unite and declare Jihad (holy religious war) against America. Bukhari also indecently suggested to the Prime Minister of India to maintain silence on the issue. This provocative speech of Bukhari naturally stirred up the nation and the media.

The vicious manslaughters leading to the creation of Pakistan, the continuous troublesome activities conducted by Pakistan, the four wars imposed on India (from Kashmir to Kargil), all these incidents put together

were having an impact on the general mood of the people. The Leaders of Pakistan handled politics in such a way that hatred about India was always their focal point. Though the common man of Pakistan was not India's enemy, the co-relation between terrorist activities in Kashmir and the Islamic fundamentalism got firmly established in the collective mindset. Because of this the younger generation started viewing the Muslims in a new perspective. As a result, any local incident and rumour which otherwise would have been insignificant, were viewed differently.

LOCAL ATMOSPHERE

While these events occurred at the national and international levels, the Tabligis (Muslim missionaries propagating Islamic ideals and religion) entering Saswad, along with the shed, which was built in the Muslim graveyard, attracted controversial discussions. The Committee talked with the concerned individuals about the Tabligis and the shed and found nothing objectionable. Previously only a couple of missionaries came to Saswad and they resided at the Shahi Mosque – where the Maulana and others made arrangements for their meals. For the past eight to ten years, the number of missionaries increased and this got noticed by the local residents. With a view to make the teachings of Tabligis available to the Muslims staying at a distance from the mosque; arrangements were made for the Tabligis to stay in the Muslim graveyard in the city. To bid farewell to the deceased loved ones, many persons used to visit the graveyard. With the Municipal Council permission and funds, a shed was erected for these visitors to relax. Arrangements were made for the Tabligis to stay and pray. The Municipal Council also provided them with a water connection.

There is a slum in the proximity of the graveyard. The slum dwellers used to use the graveyard premises as a toilet space. In order to dissuade them from doing so as it destroys the sanctity of the place, a high wall was built so that no body could enter the graveyard. The Municipal

Council had officially granted permission for this and had also partially borne the expenses. Remaining expenses were met by donations from well-to-do Muslims. In order to provide privacy to the shed inside the graveyard, a wall was built, again with the help of the Municipal Council and the local Muslims. The Tabligis started praying facing the wall. Of late the Tabligis missionaries traveling in impressive comfortable cars provided to them by the wealthy Muslims of Mumbai were reaching the graveyard late at night and hence started catching attention of the local people.

Though the number of Tabligi missionaries had increased and they were arriving late at night, there was nothing really objectionable in that. But because of the national and international events mentioned above and the misleading discourse put forth by the Hindu fanatics on various subjects like the history of the middle ages, unnecessary fear due to the increase in population of the Muslims at the national level, wrong information spread about the common civil code, baseless, ideological and emotional perspective on culture, many minds got polluted and they became suspicious about the Tabligi missionaries. The impact of the teachings of the missionaries was also perceived some Muslim youth started keeping beards (who had never done so before) Some Muslims who earlier used to participate in the Hindu festivals stopped doing so as they started believing that Islam is against idol worship. Sunnis and Tabligis actually are opposed to the Moharram processions too.

Tablig : The meaning of this word is to spread or propagate. During the first decade of the 20th century, in the North West area of Hariyana and Rajasthan, this organization was established. Originally a community called Mevu lived here. During the Mughal regime though the Hindus of this area accepted Islam as their religion, their customs, way of dressing remained largely Hindu. Barring a few wealthy landlords, majority were small farmers. Whenever there was a drought, these farmers took loans to survive and gradually due to their inability to repay became poverty stricken. At such times the Hindu landlords confiscated

their land holdings. During the first decade of the 20th century, this community got caught in such crisis. At this time, a self proclaimed leader and follower of Islam, Maulana Ahmed Ilyas put forth his views that the Mevu community got caught up in crisis because they had not been following the basic principles of Islam. He established the Tabligi organization which in due course of time spread rapidly. Even today in all the five continents of the world the Tabligi missionaries are at work. They emphasized simple living, free from alcohol or any other vices, traditional dressing (men keeping beards, women wearing Burakha – veils covering their faces) rejection of idol worship and other principles based on the Koran.

The Tabligi work procedure comprises of informing others of the principles of Islam, laying more emphasis on life after death and importance of being able to enter heaven than the material world here and its problems. They also give a lot of importance to people's dress code and rituals. This gives a rise to the conflict of establishing a separate identity, which was earlier guided by the local culture. Attempts to differentiate oneself get underlined and this factor of differentiation is used politically by many groups, is the observation of one scholar.

But many a times these teachings are ignored in the popular festive mood. Due to the impact of the Tabligi preaching, some Muslims in Saswad started praying Namaj regularly. A couple of girls started wearing Burkhas. Some men started wearing white caps like the Tabligi priests. Hindus noticed such changes in the way of dressing of the Muslims and were upset by it.

Many Hindus who complete the Wari pilgrimage start wearing a particular type of necklace of beads. Many Hindus adorned their foreheads with saffron or ash marks. Sometimes, we come across Hindus wearing the traditional saffron colored headgear – Pheta. If there was nothing wrong with this, then why should eyebrows be raised when Muslims dress up as per their traditions? But as we all know, once the minds are polluted, discretion, tolerance starts decreasing.

Such changed atmosphere gave rise to rumours in Saswad. Though the Municipal Council built the wall in 1985, a whispering campaign began saying that it was unofficially built so that Tabligi missionaries could safely sit inside and conspire. Similarly, it was said, weapons and bombs were stored inside the shed and a wall was built around the shed, and height of the outer wall was increased to conceal all this. Another rumour was that there was a plan to explode a bomb in the city on the day of Dassera. One Muslim citizen of Saswad, who had come up in life, by sheer hard work had been to the Haj pilgrimage twice. But it was rumoured that he had been there seven – eight times. The money required for this and also for making food arrangements for the Tabligi missionaries came from Muslim countries outside, was also a rumour, which had spread. Such baseless stories / rumours were being told and retold where there was absolutely no evidence, but they created a lot of anger and insecurity in the minds of the Hindus.

The rumours which created waves in and around Saswad and the entire Purandar Taluka before the 7th October incident were as follows

- 1 A Muslim has built a basement near a small dam at Garade, which supplies water to Saswad. A bomb was found near this dam / in the basement.
- 2 There are RDX and bombs in the Saswad graveyard and in the mosque at Jejuri. On Dassera bombs are going to blast the Garade dam, schools and colleges.
- 3 Weapons were found in the Saswad graveyard.
- 4 CBI/Delhi/Punjab police raided Garade at night and Saswad police have no information on this.
- 5 The Muslims who arrive in Saswad from outside are SIMI activists.
- 6 There are three telephones in the Saswad graveyard, the bill of which came to Rs. 25,000/- (some opined that these numbers were not registered in the telephone exchange).

- 7 One person from Saswad connected with SIMI goes four times a year to Haj. After being arrested by the CBI the person was released on a bail of Rs.8,00,000/.
- 8 Osama Bin Laden came to Garade in this own helicopter.

Not a single statements had an ounce of truth in it. But they certainly created an atmosphere of insecurity and fear. After the incident because there were rumours of stone throwing, the Monday market of Saswad was closed and the rumour that Muslims are coming to Saswad from Kondhava had caused panic and one school closed down after half the time.

According to one reputed doctor in Saswad, relations between Hindus and Muslims are extremely cordial and rumours alone were responsible for the untoward incident. 'Did anyone contact Muslim citizens to enquire about the rumours and find out the truth?' was the question asked to the doctor by the Committee members. But the Muslim community had not been contacted was the reply. Even a lecturer who is a supporter of the RSS ideology accepted the fact that the Muslims should have been contacted and asked about the rumours but as there was no dialogue with them, it did not happen.

ANONYMOUS CIRCULAR

Three days before the communal attack, an anonymous circular on which the printer's name, telephone numbers were not printed, was distributed in Saswad. Along with the heading there were two illustrations on the circular. Pictures of the Saffron Flag and the national Tri-Colour flanked the heading. An appeal was made to the Hindus to awaken and the Muslims were advised to follow people like Hamid Dalwai, Abdul Kalam and observe principles laid down by their religion and live happily. Don't the Muslims of Saswad know about the SIMI activists residing at the illegally built mosque in the graveyard? Don't they know about the weapons and explosives stored there? Are the Muslims of Saswad also involved in these activities were the questions asked in this circular. While

all these activities were going on, how is it that the local protectors of law remained totally inactive, was also a point raised in the circular. Though an appeal was made to the Hindu youth to be calm and tolerant, the actual language of the circular was of a provocative nature (see Annexure 2). It was ensured that the circular distributed in the Saswad colleges, would especially reach the youth. It appears that some Hindu fundamentalist organizations or individuals had carefully prepared and distributed it before the *Jalabhishek* (religious ceremony of pouring water over idols).

This was the background to the 7th October 2001 incident. Commemorating 50 years of the renovation of the Sorati Somnath temple, with the initiative of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a *Jalabhishek* was organized in the Someshwar Temple in Saswad. VHP had made an appeal for organizing such programmes everywhere. In Saswad 7th October had been finalized for the *Jalabhishek*. So just two- three days before the religious ceremony, copies of this provocative circular were distributed everywhere. It was ensured that students from outside Saswad, who come to Saswad for education, also got copies of this circular. A group of 10 to 15 students loyal to one senior political leader went to a printing press. The owner was not happy with the idea of printing such a circular but because of the pressure from the youth and the economic benefits, he printed the circular, informed the printer himself. The police accused one college lecturer associated with the RSS of drafting the circular. If the case appears in the court only then would the evidence will be presented. The concerned professor denied the charges leveled against him but admitted that he drafted the invitation to the *Jalabhishek*.

HOW WERE RUMOURS SPREAD?

Discussion with various people in Saswad, revealed how the rumours must have been spread. The Original rumour was 'One Muslim had purchased land near Garade Dam'. As it usually happens, the listener

while giving the same information to another, added something of his / her own, sometimes without being consciously aware of it. It was necessary to observe how the rumour gradually spread taking an increasingly provocative form, achieving the objectives set by those who made it. The rumour campaign.

ORIGINAL RUMOUR

One Muslim has purchased land near Garade Dam.



One Muslim has purchased land near Garade Dam and built a house there.



One Muslim has purchased land near Garade Dam and built a house with a basement there.



One Muslim has purchased land near Garade Dam and built a house with a basement where RDX and bombs have been kept.



One Muslim has purchased land near Garade Dam where he has built a house with a basement in which RDX and bombs have been kept. There is a plan to explode these bombs on Dassera and blast Garade dam, schools and colleges of Saswad, Khandoba Temple of Jejuri. For this task Osama Bin Laden visited Garade.

Actually citizens of Garade and Saswad police went to the concerned spot and searched but they did not find any weapons, bombs or explosives.

It appears that while spreading rumours, care was taken to ensure that people from all strata of society would become insecure. The rumour

that the Khandoba temple, schools and colleges of Saswad are going to be exploded, caused panic and fear in the minds of common religious minded folk, students, teachers, parents and all others concerned and developed anger and hatred about the minority community. Rumours have always been effective weapons of people wanting to create and mount communal tensions and that is the reason why every citizen should be aware and alert.

After knowing that the contents of the anonymous circular were provocative, the local police had suggested that on The 6th October, one day prior to the *Jalabhishek*, the Pune District Rural Police call a meeting, inviting important persons from the city. Many prominent citizens from both the communities attended this Peace Committee Meeting. With reference to Imam Bukhari's statement after the 11th September 2001 attacks in USA, a reputed doctor associated closely with the RSS and the BJP suggested that Muslims present for the meeting should openly condemn Imam Bukhari, Jihaad and Osama Bin Laden. Muslim citizens complied immediately. Police suggested that the same doctor should draft a letter of condemnation. The letter was drafted and signed by the Muslims present. Then it was suggested that other Muslims from the city should also sign it.

In the entire Purandar Taluka, Police had already declared imposition of section 144 of the IPC under which there is a ban on group gathering at public places. But as the *Jalabhishek* was a religious activity and only for a short duration, police did not take objection to it. But if the entire area was under the imposition of section 144 of the IPC, how was the *Jalabhishek* allowed to take place, was the question asked by many. A reply given by one senior volunteer of the RSS was 'All preparations for the *Jalabhishek* were done and if the ceremony would have been cancelled or prohibited at the last minute, religious sentiments of the Hindus would have been hurt and so it was not called off'.

In the Peace Committee Meeting it was decided that except for the *Jalabhishek* there would be no procession or programme. Though the

meeting took place in peaceful and cordial atmosphere, the ones who had planned to target the Muslim community had obviously not changed their plans. They informed their friends “Just wait and see what happens tomorrow”. After the Meeting it appears as though the police were convinced that the day of the religious ceremony would be peaceful and everything would be under control. One batch of the State Reserve Police force was organized near the graveyard on the 7th October and few policemen were on duty near the place of *Jalabhishek*. The Rajgad Co-operative Sugar Factory was having its elections on the 7th October and hence majority of the police force was sent there.

Some inform that on the 7th of October approximately 50 persons were present for the *Jalabhishek* in the ground opposite to the Sangameshwar Temple. After the ceremony, a fanatic Hindu, a former BJP Corporator who is now an independent Corporator from Pune made a speech. According to those present for the ceremony and the police, this speaker said that all other programmes except the *Jalabhishek* had been cancelled. It had been decided that the letter of condemnation signed by the Muslims was to be read out at this function. But the letter did not reach before the *Jalabhishek* was over, said the doctor. Since the police remained relaxed, the local police system did not take up the responsibility of handing over the condemnation letter to the ground on time, objected the doctor. In the meanwhile the number of youth attending the ceremony went on increasing. The electric supply had failed on the 7th October due to the morning rains. So Xerox copies of the condemnation letter could not be made available on time. But the Muslims had put up two cloth banners expressing their protest. The fact that the previous night the Muslims had strongly protested to the 11th September incident and the statement of Imam Bukhari was not announced to the crowd. According to the doctor, the condemnation letter did not reach the *Jalabhishek* venue on time, but he claims that he tried to inform the crowd that the Muslims who were present for the Peace Committee Meeting of the previous day, did protest about the concerned event and the statements of the Imam.

The few police, who were on duty near the *Jalabhishek* venue, were unable to inform the crowd that section 144 of the Indian Penal Code prohibiting unlawful gathering had been imposed in the entire area, and therefore the area should be evacuated. As there was no additional police force in the city, these few policemen did not dare to arrest the gathered youth. Groups of youngsters kept coming forward. In the meanwhile the letter of condemnation signed by the Muslims reached the venue and the doctor started reading it out aloud to the gathering. By this time, all the prominent persons who had come for the *Jalabhishek* had gone away and the youth were in no mood to listen to anybody. They jostled the doctor and did not allow him to read the letter. The doctor said "I read out the letter near the Municipal Council but nobody was interested in listening. A drunkard pulled my collar. Feeling bad about the whole thing, I came home. The crowd then went to the south end of the market and started damaging property."

While all this was happening news of the youth giving slogans and moving ahead had spread all over the city. Bharat Bakery owned by a Muslim whose grandfather was a freedom fighter was set ablaze. By this time throngs of people, a majority of whom were youth started gathering from all directions. The ones near the graveyard forced them into the shed, destroyed it along with the wall, which was built around it. Police and SRP resorted to lathi charge but they were stoned by the frenzied mob and 15 policemen were injured. It is difficult to quote the exact number of people, gathered at the venue. The estimated figures vary from 300 to 5000. People differ in opinion on whether youth outside Saswad were involved in these communal attacks. Main objective of the attackers was to destroy the small vendors' pushcarts and shops by setting them ablaze. It is not clear whether the decision to burn down property was taken many days before or on the spot. But it can be concluded that, targeting the Muslims harassing them was a pre-planned objective. In the case of a wealthy family, which used to go for the Haj pilgrimage, it is not absolutely clear whether attackers wanted to just destroy property or also

burn the family members. But it would be daring to say that in the frenzy of destroying the property, the attackers were not aware of the danger to human life. Women, two sick children and the elderly members of the family, all jumped down from their burning house, and were severely injured. Fortunately, the three gas cylinders exploded after these persons had escaped. If the neighbouring Hindus had not helped them to escape, they would have lost their lives as the basement of the house was first set on fire, and soon the flames engulfed the entire house. The intention of the attackers was not of killing the people, when the two-storied house was set on fire. But knowing that there were people inside could it be said that the attackers were not aware of the endangering those inside? If the intention would have been just to destroy the property (by setting on fireKelyachi Wakhar), then they could have warned the inhabitants of the danger to their lives. But this warning was never given. Citizens inform that at some other places such warnings were given. Then why wasn't it given in this particular case?

The estimates of damage both due to vandalism and fire vary from Rs. 42,00,000 to Rs. 1,00,00, 000 (See Annexure 5 for details of damage). The unanswered question is why did local leadership not feel like accepting the responsibility of properly rehabilitating the Muslim families? The Corporation elections were due shortly. It appears that a majority of the leaders did not take up the issue of the rehabilitation of the Muslims seriously enough as they did not want to lose the majority Hindu votes.

The estimate of the total damage by the police is around Rs.42,00,000. The victims have not received any compensation from the Government so far. One political leader of Saswad provided Rs.1.5 lakhs. Some of this amount was given as aid while some was given as loan. Police contributed Rs.17,000 by sacrificing one day's salary and the Muslim Co-operative Bank also provided some help. Corporators collected some amount and distributed it. During Diwali, many neighbouring Hindu families sent sweets and other delicacies to the

Muslim families. The Municipal Council also gave them Diwali crackers stalls at concessional rates. Muslims from Mumbai helped by providing essentials, cereals and grain.

The Fact Finding Committee tried to talk to the youth who had participated in the attack. But there was not much response. Nothing of significance could be gathered from their talk with a few youngsters. In totality, it did not appear as though there was any feeling of repentance or regret. Rather the expression that 'People are bound to react like this after their sentiments been hurt have exploded or 'Hindus dying or disappearing in Kashmir is bound to have some reaction' was felt by some. But barring a few exceptions there not any feeling of guilt. The trauma of the Muslims will be reduced and the wounds will heal gradually only if the citizens of Saswad develop a true sense of remorse.

VICTIMS OF THE ATTACK

Members of the Fact Finding Committee met families, which had been attacked and also inspected the damaged places.

The door of one Muslim family's house, which was set on fire, had turned black. There were heaps of stones, bricks and rubble inside. It was like looking at a house devastated by an earthquake. The roof had totally collapsed. Earlier the house had a floor above, but now there was not the slightest trace of it. A storehouse of steel vessels was on the ground floor and the family lived on the first floor. Among the damaged ruins were burnt vessels, some of which were totally misshaped, burnt mixers and cookers. Only the skeleton of a brand new Hero Honda motorcycle remained. A girl's in the family was to be married. All her clothes, jewelry, and cash kept aside for the marriage ceremony were burnt.

The house was completely devastated. The members of the family narrated how the house was attacked. "First stones were hurled at the house. Women and children gathered in the hall upstairs after the stones

started coming in. One old lady went to the balcony. Immediately people on the street hurled stones and bricks at the balcony. We told her to come inside and we shut the balcony door. At that time one boy was suffering from typhoid, and one girl's hand was in plaster. Such huge stones were being thrown on the door of the hall and it was shaking so much that we felt it would collapse any moment. The crowd locked the door from outside, set the walls and wooden frames of the house on fire and went away. There was fire on the ground floor. How were we to get out? After they left, we opened the door of the hall upstairs and came outside. The balcony was fortunately intact and so we were saved. Women and children jumped from the balcony. The little girl's plaster got caught somewhere while jumping. She freed it from whatever it was, and jumped. The youngsters staying opposite our house caught the jumping children. We had to throw down the old lady from the balcony. Her spinal cord was affected she was seriously was injured. "*Hamari jaan bachi, vahi bahut hai* (our life was saved, but that's about it). We have no roof over our heads. Where are we to go? Ours was a happy, big, joint family, which comprised four nuclear families. Probably it was affected by someone's evil eye. Our father-in-law was a teacher. He worked hard, saved money and built this house. After saving some amount of money he would get one window fixed and so on. This is how the house was built. In his old age this is too much of a shock to him. The house burnt down before his eyes. The family members could not hide their grief while narrating all this.

Ganibhai Bagwan is the name of the old man who used to be a school teacher. Everyone called him 'Ganimaster'. He collapsed totally after this incident. Everyday he used to come and sit in front of the devastated house. On the 24th of February 2003 he died of a heart attack.

Along with the house, the family's important documents, ration cards, gas cards, insurance papers, everything got burnt. The members of the family informed that at present they are harassed, as they do not have their ration/gas cards.

The Committee Members also visited the shops burnt in the Saswad market. One shop was surrounded by Hindu shop-owners. To ensure that the fire would not affect the Hindu shops, material and stock from the Muslim owner's shop was brought outside and then set on fire. Much of the stock was looted in presence of the owner. To open the closed shutter of the shop, rods, hacksaw, katavani and big stones were used. One shop owner showed the rods thrown by the attackers in his shop.

Committee members also met the person, who was rumored to be a SIMI activist. He said so far he had been to Haj only twice. Because of religious sentiments, Muslims save money in order to visit Haj at least once in a lifetime. Similarly this person was also aspiring to go to Haj. He was in the real estate and banana trading business. According to him he and his family members have worked very hard to come up in life. Their efforts paid off and the family achieved a wealthy status. So not only Hindus but some Muslims were also jealous and envious of their raised social status. When the rumour spread that he was arrested, police requested him to purposely meet some people in town with the intention that they should realize that there weren't any arrests of Muslims and the rumour was false. This person accordingly went and did meet people in Saswad and informed that he had not been arrested. But when rumours were being spread about Muslim arrests, despite knowing that they are totally baseless, the Hindus as well as Muslims who were envious of his status, did nothing to stop them. If there was going to be a loss to him from these rumours, that is what they wanted, suspected this wealthy trader.

Men from the families which had been attacked,, were met by the Committee in a Joint Meeting. They expressed their feelings by saying "We all are under mental pressure. Our daily earnings have stopped. Nobody has any feelings of compassion, kindness towards us. You must have done something and therefore you were attacked" is what some people say. The people, with whom we enjoyed good friendly relations,

do not even look at us’.

When asked why there was no loss of human life in this attack. All replied ‘None of us resisted. If we would have, then there would have been loss of human life’. Reaction of one Muslim man from this group was disturbing. He said “ At present we are like unwanted animals going to the slaughterhouse. We do not want any conflict “. One fruit vendor narrated his experience. He said “ After the communal attack, people picked up and ate expensive fruits from my push-cart but I did not have the guts to say ‘don’t eat them free. Pay for them.’ One student studying in college said “ My friends tease me by saying beware of us.” Some Hindu youth threatened one Muslim youngster. “ Your scooter was saved last time. Behave properly with us, otherwise . . .”

While the attacks were going on, the Muslim families were advised by their Hindu neighbours to leave the locality and go elsewhere. They did not get enough co-operation from their Hindu neighbours. “ If we help you, they will kill us..... These x x x should not be helped.” was the range of reactions. Some Muslims who were running to save their lives were refused to be taken as co-passengers in jeeps. An incident of not allowing a Muslim to phone from the public booth took place. Muslims had to travel in any vehicle available to them, taking them to their relatives living in other cities. One Muslim woman went with her children to her relatives in a village near Saswad. The Sarpanch of the village along with some other villagers came to this family and told the head of the family ‘If anyone comes from Saswad, do not entertain them. If any problem takes place later on, don’t come and tell us’. Because of this threat the Muslim woman had to leave this house too.

DAMAGE DONE TO PROPERTY

The communal conflict Saswad naturally had its impact on other cities and villages in the Purandar Taluka. Because rumours had spread

in these villages too, anti Muslim feelings prevailed everywhere.

The rumour had been spread that in the mosque at Jejuri, weapons had been hidden. Muslim citizens of Jejuri, and the police went to the mosque along with the Jejuri citizens and showed them that there are no stocks of weapons and thus further calamity avoided.

□□□

Analysis of the Communal Attack

Saswad, a city blessed by Saints likes Sopandev, famous for its glorious religious heritage was put to shame on the 7th October 2001 by the violent communal attack. Families of the weak, minority Muslims were attacked, their means of livelihood destroyed and many frightened Muslims had to flee away from Saswad and take shelter elsewhere. The age-old tradition of Hindu-Muslim unity was shattered. How can this be described as a riot? Because in a riot there are two groups and the relations between them are tense, as there is animosity for years together. One group instigates the rival group, who then resorts to violence to teach a lesson. This gives rise to clashes where there are attacks and counter-attacks and the cycle of revenge grips both the parties and a riot take place. Nothing of this sort happened at Saswad on the 7th of October 2001. Saswad does not have a history of Hindu-Muslim conflicts and animosity.

The Muslims at Saswad were enjoying cordial relations with the majority Hindu community. They had not antagonized or challenged the Hindus in any way. In spite of this some people at Saswad start believing in rumours like 'Impact of Tabligi is increasing; SIMI activists are entering the city, stocks of RDX, bombs and explosives etc. are in the mosque.' And these people did not stop there. They immediately went against the Muslims of their own city, attacked shops, burnt houses of innocent Muslims. When such an incident occurs, it is not just a riot. It is an attack that appears like a riot. These attacks have wider historical, political, social and psychological references. Without taking these factors into consideration, the meaning of such occurrences will not be clear. Unless

there is clarity on this, how can people be educated in this regard?

Riots are not only an issue of law, order and administration. They create a huge obstacle in creating responsible citizenship in a civil society, which is based on healthy, mature and broad understanding. That is why riots / communal attacks cannot be perceived only in the framework of law and order; and benefits and damages. They have to be perceived as the biggest evil in the process of creating a harmonies society. If the Saswad communal attack is seen from this perspective what were the factors germane to it ?

There appears to be unanimous agreement on certain points between majority of the citizens of Saswad including political leaders, journalists, intelligentsia and the masses. These points are as follows

- 1 Nobody thought that there would be this kind of communal violence in a city, which had enjoyed cordial relations between Hindus and Muslims for so many years.
- 2 People having vested interests are always spreading rumours. But ordinary citizens realize the falseness and futility of the rumours as they see through them. So there will be rumours and gossip, but it will all settle down as what everyone thought. But rumours capture minds of people creating violent feelings and hatred collectively. And such a community can easily indulge in violence. However, what people did not realize was that these vicious rumours can provide a temporary purpose to life (though a negative one), to the unemployed, frustrated and otherwise aimless and directionless youth. And such a situation could trigger off violent riots or attacks.
- 3 Most people never thought that except for the wild fire of rumours, incidents of terrorism at the international level and communalism being manifested within the nation could provoke such a communal attack and that too in a city like Saswad where harmonious relations between the Hindus and Muslims always

existed. (After the attack many saw the connections and impacts of the attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) and other such incidents at the international level).

- 4 Most found it difficult to believe that harmless and peace loving Muslim citizens became victims of a communal attack in a place like Saswad which enjoyed leadership of secular parties like the Congress and the Janata Dal and where RSS, Shivsena and fanatic organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad had not spread their roots and established a solid base.
- 5 The factors that were causing the tension to rise were also sorted out. For example, rumours like 'there is a stock of RDX in Garade village, some Muslims of Saswad are associated with SIMI activists etc,' were investigated by the police as well as some Muslim citizens and were found to be baseless. But people had not forgotten the rumours totally. Permission to the procession after the Jalabhishek had been denied. The Muslim population of Saswad had, as per the expectations of the Hindus, condemned Imam Bukhari's disrespectful statements about the Prime Minister. They had also vouched that they were in no way connected with SIMI or Osama Bin Laden. So with this background there was really no reason for the communal attack. Of course these efforts of clearing doubts, projecting the real situation were not given as much publicity as was due by journalists, political leaders and other organizations claiming to do social and cultural work. Even the people who had demanded the rumours to be investigated into, were convinced about the real situation. What majority of the people in Saswad felt was that in such conditions, there will not be any trouble or riot and even if it takes place, at the most it will be limited to small morchas, slogans of protest etc.
- 6 Many also thought that *Jalabhishek* is a religious ceremony. How could it lead to conflict. Many might have felt that instead of

opposing it, it would to be more appropriate to reduce its importance by ignoring it. The actual *Jalabhishek* ceremony took place without a big crowd and series of speeches. But the fact that the message spread by the *Jalabhishek* would be so powerful and effective, evoking the cause of Hindu identity was not realized by many.

All the above six presumptions were proved wrong by the Saswad incident. Communal riots are a gift to us of the colonial period. In Maharashtra communal riots have frequently taken place in Mumbai, Thane, Bhivandi, Pune, Solapur, Ahmadnagar, Mahad, Aurangabad, Malegaon before and after independence. Up to the 70s, the riots were limited to the cities and their suburbs. After the 70s we witness communal riots affecting semi-urban and rural areas also. Most of these cities have a tradition of communal tensions and riots (Mumbai, Bhivandi, Malegaon). During an event like the Shivajayanti procession, the Ganeshotsav, over a trivial, insignificant point, somebody purposely instigates the other community, tension mounts and a riot is triggered. But the riot at Saswad seems to have started a new trend when there was no local tension, the Muslims had not committed any error and there was a century old tradition of secular, harmonious relations in the city. Despite this the social mindset turning communal, is something new and peculiar. People being affected by rumours, accompanied by some insignificant incidents like the Tabligis entering the city, a few Muslims (in order to establish their separate identity), starting to dress up traditionally, a couple of women wearing Burkhas, could indulge in such violent acts, depriving fellow Muslims of their livelihoods and shelter, is something new and shocking in the land of Maharashtra. The reasons for such an incident may appear to be of local nature and form or have purposely been thus projected but this was not the case. The real reasons for this have to be searched for in the post independence political processes of India.

Conclusion

POST INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL REALITY

The creation of Pakistan was a severe shock to the Indians, especially to the Hindu mainorty. It cost India Mahatma Gandhi's life and yet the leaders of Pakistan were never satisfied and never resorted to maintaining harmonious relations with India. Starting with Kashmir right up to attack on Kargil, India was forced into war four times. The Pakistani secret agents' service promotes many activities in India some involving sabotage, threatening the integrity of the nation. India on the other hand did not change its policy of maintaining cordial relations with Pakistan. Muslims going to Haj pilgrimage by Air are given a subsidy of 20%.

Many laws were created to bring about social reforms in the Hindu society. But in order to establish equality and justice, to bring about reforms in the Muslim community, the present and the previous ruling Government of India did not dare to formulate laws. In 1986 the Supreme Court gave a historical verdict in the Shahabano case that she should receive maintenance. But fanatic religious leaders among the Muslims created a racket, forcing the Central Government to change the decision. Nobody – not even the judiciary could interfere in religious matters was the orthodox stand taken by the Muslim fundamentalists. This did not mean any losses for the Hindu community per se. But the Muslim leadership did not allow the issue to die. They adopted the strategy of complaining about some trivial matters and thus continuously fanned religious sentiments. Eventually people started falling prey to the propaganda of the fanatic Hindu leaders that 'All this happened because

of the cowardliness of the Hindus and appeasement of Muslims'. Without investigating the truth, people started becoming inclined towards accepting totally false statements propagated by the Hindu fanatics on a number of subjects. Once the mind is polluted then even local events get seen from a changed perspective.

It appears as though what was happening at the national level was also happening at Saswad. The national events were having their impact on the citizens especially the youth. That is why their perception on the Tabligi missionaries, the protective wall being built in the graveyard got distorted. As the impact of Hindu fanaticism increased in the 80s, the attitude of Hindu youth towards non-Hindus, especially the Muslims naturally underwent a sea change.

THE CHANGING POLITICAL REALITY AFTER 1980

Indian nationalism has taken a new turn after 1980. This 8th decade saw the rise of new capitalism. As this was happening, all the nation-states dropped their garbs of being welfare states and while adjusting to neo-capitalism, started speaking of the limitations of the state. Indian ruling class too, adjusted its economic system to the one at the international level and started talking about the New Economic Order and entering the 21st century. This was the third major change of the Indian nationalism. The nationalism of the freedom struggle was humanitarian, liberal and proclaiming the spirit of freedom.

Post-independence nationalism embraced secular democratic socialism. A lot of hard work sometimes, even tight-rope-acts were done to achieve the socialist objectives within the framework of the elected capitalist democracy. A mixed economy was implemented and the social groups and the neo-middleclass, who benefited most from this policy, deserted it in the 80s and conveniently forgot the Nehruvian model of nationalism.

Thus started the third phase of Indian nationalism where Hinduism was embraced with open arms and the propaganda “Hinduism is the only Nationalism” was gaining ground. This nationalism kept aside its traditionally tolerant, secular and liberal perspective and was now becoming more religiously fanatic, aggressive and arrogant. Demolition of the Babri mosque, attacks on Christian missionaries, increasing atrocities on women and Hindutvisation of Dalit, Adivasis, etc all bear testimony to this. Indecent criticism and imposition of undeclared censorship on the freedom of expression, threats to intellectuals, sportspersons, artists and literati (eg. Bitter criticism of Shabana Azmi with reference to the movie Fire, vandalism at renowned painter M. F. Hussein’s residence), cultural dictatorship are some examples of their arrogance. That is why in the current times, marked by intolerance, analysis of religion or discussion on atheism become religious treachery. Different or contrary opinions on defence policies and strategies are considered an act of treason. The discussion of Hindu society, its caste system, Brahmanism is either labeled as castiest or considered to be a disloyalty towards Hindu religion.

‘We all are of one religion and that is why our interests are the same and so we all should unite’ is the presumption at the root of communalism. Right from pre-independence period, the organizations advocating the Hindutva ideology have felt that the only way to bring about unity in a society fragmented by the caste system, is to project a Hindu identity. So Hindutva served and still serves the dual purpose of differentiating the majority from the non-Hindus and also works as a soothing remedy to the discriminating caste system. Hence the speedy spread of Hindu communalism.

In every nook and corner of the country, organizations of the Hindutva Parivar like the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal have been awakening the Hindu spirit and identity for well over a decade and a half, by conducting various activities like Rathayatra, building of the Ram Temple,

Religious Parliament (Dharmasansad), *Jalabhishek*, Chetawani Yatra etc. Constantly harping on the Muslims' so-called religious fanaticism; sometimes linking their identity either with Pakistan or with terrorists / anti-nationalists, creating an atmosphere of insecurity and trepidation in the Hindu society and generating anti-Muslim feelings has been the topmost programme of these organizations. (One remembers the quote of one fanatic Hindu who said that Hindus are a minority in India by saying "India is a Hindu Island in an Islamic Sea"). These organizations always aim to win sanction to the Hindutva ideology by arguing that though Muslims are pampered in India, they are not loyal to the nation. Indian secularism is psuedo and the Hindu religion and Hindutva ideology alone are secular. in nature. Right from collecting bricks for the Ram Mandir to the *Jalabhishek* programmes, information with all the in-built biases reached Saswad through the VHP that successfully influenced the youngsters with the Hindutva ideology. Thus the process of Hindutvisation was on in full swing. The communal attack of 7th October was the direct consequence of this political process of Hindutvisation. Otherwise in Saswad where the BJP, Shivsena, Patit Pavan Sanghatna and RSS are not very strong, just on the basis of rumours, attacking the minority Mulsimis would not have been possible. V. D. Savarkar used to say 'Militarize the Hindus and Hinduize the nation'. Similarly the process of Hindutvisation in India is firmly taking roots with the hidden slogan, 'Politicize the castes and communities and Hinduize the Indians'. The VHP, Bajarang Dal, RSS through various programmes and cultural and social activities are giving the Hindu identity to non-Brahmin castes and thus reaching out to the masses of the semi-urban and rural areas. The RSS Parivar is very actively at work through various organizations in different sections of society to propagate its ideology, eg. The Vanwasi Kalyan Ashram for the Adivasis, the Samarasata Manch to integrate the backward classes in mainstream Hinduism, the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch for propagating the use of indigenous products, the Sanskar Bharati in the field of arts etc.

The Sangh Parivar is opposed to calling the Adivasis – Adivasis because actually they were the original inhabitants of this land. But they were forced to take shelter in jungles, mountains and hills as they were chased away by Aryans who came from outside and invaded this land. The Sangh Parivar finds it difficult to accept this reality so they insist on calling the Adivasis- Vanawasis (settlers in forests). If the fact that Aryans too came from outside, is accepted on a mass scale then the Parivar fears that their propaganda that Muslims and Christians are outsiders will not be effective. Various organizations affiliated to the RSS like the Durgavahini, Rashtra Sevika Samiti, Bajarang Dal, etc are carrying out the Hindutvisation programme all over the country. For achieving their goal without the slightest hesitation they use different strategies and tactics comprising purposeful misinterpretation of situations, spreading of false propaganda, distortion of history, spreading of rumours, Gobel's publicity technique and unabated violence. It is observed that the same process of Hindutvisation was consciously being implemented at Saswad too. Many people believe in the false propaganda being spread at the national level. We could see that the reputed doctor from Saswad represented such a class of people. He says, "How much secular we should remain is a question as lakhs of people were killed in Kashmir. There were bomb blasts in Mumbai and RDX was found. There was a riot in Malegaon." This statement shows how the false propaganda of the Hindu fanatics has taken deep roots in the minds of people. Those who are directly associated with fundamentalist Hindu organizations, are bound to hold extremist and fanatic opinions. Like one lecturer from Saswad says, "There are only three options. One is to give Muslims a separate state, second is to annihilate them and third one is to accommodate them. But the Hindus have already accommodated them and therefore it cannot be said that Hindus are not secular". From this the general ideology of the Hindutva can be understood.

HINDUTVISATION

The very means of livelihood of Muslims were attacked in Saswad, and on the same day a *Jalabhishek* ceremony was organized in the Sangameshwar Temple. Such types of programmes are consciously organized by the VHP. One RSS volunteer from Saswad said, "The purpose of programmes like the *Jalabhishek* is to unite the Hindus".

When the impact of religion increases, people become heavily dependent on fate and destiny. The ability to analyze the situation or to protest against injustice drastically reduces or vanishes. People become afraid of raising simple doubts, once they hear that 'it has been written in the religious doctrines'. Religion teaches that whatever has been written in the doctrines or what the religious leaders convey, should be accepted unconditionally. In India the impact of religion on different castes and communities has been profound. Taking advantage of this situation, the RSS and the VHP maintain their religious supremacy by utilizing *Jalabhishek* and other such religious ceremonies.

In 1992 the Babri Mosque was demolished. We all are aware of the politics of the fanatic Hindu organizations. The RSS is a religiously bigoted organization, which is actually interested in maintaining a dominant social order, based on centuries-old caste system and patriarchy but creates an impression of possessing modern values based on equality. In other words, instead of declaring 'Janave' (the sacred thread traditionally worn only by the Brahmins) obsolete, they are keen that the downtrodden too wear this thread. For achieving such targets, right from its inception the RSS and its allied organizations have planned and worked systematically. They have established their branches in different cities, villages increasing their network, placed their people in crucial positions in practically all fields, established workers' unions so that workers too can be influenced by their ideology and finally are taking their ideology to the Adivasis.

The RSS is interested in maintaining the established discriminating social order based on the caste system and also wants to ensure that it will remain so in future too. No religion teaches and preaches to hate other religions. But the Hindutvisation of the RSS Parivar destroys the good traditions of the Hindu religion and teaches to hate other religions. Once upon a time Muslim invaders had done exactly the same thing by demolishing Hindu temples, breaking Hindu idols. In the colonial era they were not interested in temples. They wanted the nation to be partitioned and their dream of creating Pakistan was fulfilled after losing from 08,00,000 human lives. Actually the Hindutva of the RSS Parivar is an unpardonable offence against the Hindu religion. Right from Saint Dnyaneshwar each one who proclaimed equality, raised a voice against the rigid Hindu customs and traditions was tortured. The same tradition is followed by the Hindu fanatics inspired by the RSS. These people have reached every nook and corner of India. How can Saswad be an exception to this?

Though political parties engaged in religion-based politics never had any significant support and base in Purandar Taluka, the VHP and BJP did exist for a long time. There were a few youngsters awed by Bajarang Dal and Shivsena too. But overall number of activists or volunteers actively supporting the Hindutva Parivar was not, and is not large. While searching for the root cause of the communal attack on the Muslims of Saswad, if we trace the local politics of the Sangh Parivar, the picture starts becoming significantly clearer.

The *Jalabhishek* was not the first programme of the Hindutvawadi organizations. In 1992 after demolition of the Babri Masjid, there was a massive 'brick collection' programme in the entire nation for building the Ram Mandir. Bricks had been sent from Saswad and the Purandar Taluka. Majority of the naïve and religious-bound rural folk did not comprehend the politics behind the brick collection drive, Ram Mandir

and the Ayodhya issue. Even those, who knew may not fully have grasped the complexities of the issue. The layman's expectations are very simple. He feels that if bricks are being sent from his town for the Ram Mandir why not perform pooja of the bricks and accumulate piousness. But Hindutvawadi organizations project the layman's naïve religious faiths as political loyalties and propagate that the ordinary layperson is also a follower of the Hindutva ideology.

On Dassera the RSS conducts its traditional parade (*Sanchalan*). Since the past few years this programme has started in Saswad also. Very few local people participate in this while a majority are from outside – from Pune – informed the Saswad citizens.

Hindutvawadi organizations annually hold a special programme on the Purandar fort commemorating the birthday of Sambhaji, King Shivaji's son. Near Pratapgad there is a memorial of Afzalkhan, a Muslim lieutenant of the Adilshah of Vijapur in Karnataka who was killed by King Shivaji. Recently, some Muslims put up a board near the memorial saying 'while Afzalkhan went to meet Shivaji in a cordial manner, he was killed'. After this incident, love of Hindu fanatics for Shivaji has started getting expressed more aggressively. They address Sambhaji as *Dharmaveer* (a brave fighter for religion). The statement that 'King Shivaji' was in opposition to all the Muslim is a shining example of the false propaganda of the fanatic Hindus.

A couple of years back, Bajarang Dal of the Sangh Parivar had conducted a workshop on the playground of a school in Saswad. Few months before the communal attack, attempts had been made to establish the RSS branches in some towns and villages in the Purandar Taluka.

Hindutvist organizations appeal for a ban on cow slaughter. In Saswad every Monday, the cattle market is held. There are obviously some cows, which are unproductive and thus are sent to the slaughterhouse by the farmers. At least during important Hindu festivals like *Vasubaras*

in Diwali, *Ramnavami*, this should be avoided feel the Hindutvawadi leaders. Last few years they have been appealing to the people to do 'Goraksha' said one Hindu leader.

Before 7th October very provocative speeches, statements were issued. The youth who did not respond positively were told 'If you are not going to work for the Hindu Jagaran then put on chudis (bangles)'. Muslims are the enemies of this land, this nation. They are outsiders here. If they wish to stay here, they have to adjust to the lifestyle of the majority, were the feelings and thoughts consciously created in the minds of the college students. It seems one bank employee residing at Saswad who is a branded Hindu fanatic was instrumental in this malicious campaign. This bank in Saswad is considered to be the chief center of all Hindutvawadi activities. The reputed doctor informs that photographs of the RSS founder Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, former RSS chief Golwalkar Guruji are displayed in the bank. One old activist of the RSS is the bank manager here.

In schools and colleges, it is customary to put up photographs of respected leaders. In the staffroom of one high school in Saswad along with the respected national leaders, photos of Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, former RSS chief Golwalkar Guruji were displayed. The unpartitioned map of India and a picture of Bharatmata wearing the costume of a Hindu idol were also on display.

While talking to the political leaders of Saswad and Purandar, one realized that they too have been influenced by the Hindutva ideology to a certain extent. They did not find anything objectionable in programmes like the *Jalabhishek*. These leaders represent political parties, which supposedly believe in secularism. At least their image and public policy was that of secular. The youth who participated in the communal attack of 7th October were not all from fanatic Hindu parties. A majority of them were associated with secular parties also. Such a situation underlines out the spread and impact of the Hindutva ideology.

The government employees were no different from the political leaders. The police station and the Tehsil office have photos of Hindu idols. Sometimes flowers or floral garlands are offered to the idols. Coconut and scented sticks are also found there. If the police is a Muslim he either prays Namaj in the police station or goes to the nearest mosque between one and five. Our Constitution is secular. Despite this fact, in most government offices, photos of idols of the majority community are found. It cannot be argued that by doing so everyone becomes a more staunch religious person. But even then can not be denied that such an exhibition of his / her personal religious faith may affect his/her work, his/her attitude and his/her image? Might it not bring on pressure to the minority community people who come there?

In the last few years many festivals, which otherwise were always celebrated peacefully, are now being celebrated with a big bang. The majority community's is psyche consciously being communalized. This poses a danger to the religious harmony, unity and peace of the society.

The same process was taking place at Purandar and Saswad. But the influential political leaders did not realize that Hindutvisation of the masses is being done so systematically and is having a deep imprint on their mind. From the time of the 'brick collection' ceremony, the traditional citizens of Saswad especially the youth got inclined and developed a feeling of affinity towards the Hindutva Parivar.

HINDUTVISATION AND THE SPACELESSNESS OF THE MIDDLE CASTES

The largest group of people in the Hindu society is the different castes from the Shudra Varna (the lowest caste). In the Nehruvian era Congress and other secular parties with the help of this large mass base were achieving politics of hegemony of their own upper-middle class and castes. The educational development of the 70s brought a special

kind of self-awareness to the many middle or lower middle castes. This awakening made them realize that the upper, upper-middle castes and classes were using them for their own selfish motives. So they started projecting a different identity. Non-Congress politics emerged from this process. Wherever there was an alternative of a secular party to the Congress, this class accepted a new identity of an opposition party, which in actuality was a non-congress party. Wherever this was not possible, they received support from regional parties. But because of the caste-based reality of India, many of the regional parties were parties of the most dominant castes in those respective states. The *Bahujan* or the majority of the lower middle and middle castes being weak, both in terms of numbers and in the infrastructural facilities, did not find much space in these regional or regionalized parties. Then they separated themselves from the national and regional parties or kept themselves engaged in the politics of bargaining on the one hand and on the other hand kept in touch with Hindu organizations and parties and subscribed to the Hindutva ideology. Thus the *Bahujan* castes, as per their political convenience, could at the same time, take up secular or pro-Hindu or a Hindutvawadi position. Just as the Hinduist parties and organizations benefited from the spacelessness of the *Bahujan* castes, similarly they too, benefited from the Hindutva ideology. In this process the Hindutva ideology got underlined and received support of the masses that is for sure. That is why without having done much work in the semi-urban and rural areas, the Hinduist organizations and parties politicizing the middle castes, could succeed in achieving their political goals. Regional middle caste local leaders either were not / are not able to understand this or it was politically convenient for them or they could be having a selfish motive in feeling that it is better if some things are happening directly. On the day of the *Jalabhishek* after getting the slightest information on the tense situation in Saswad, had the local leaders remained there and kept an eye on all the developments, then perhaps because of their influence, the unfortunate incident that followed could have been avoided.

According to the available information, it is difficult to state that they had pre planned gone out of Saswad. But their statements like 'we had no idea about it' or 'all this has been done by them (Hinduists)' though true reflect a lack of understanding of the seriousness of the issue. Even after the incident so many programmes could have been organized which would have boosted the morale of the scared minority community like conducting goodwill and peace marches, severe public condemnation of the ugly communal attack, organizing meetings of all the citizens to remove fear from the minds of the Muslims and so on. Barring a few exceptions, these senior leaders did not do anything beyond comforting Muslims at individual levels, providing meager economic aid or sending Diwali sweets etc. On the contrary, boosting the morale of some youth who were actually involved in the attack, their parents, telling the police 'not to arrest anyone at night', providing meals to the Hindu youth in police custody was done by some political leaders. Against this background, the police cleaning up the city, sacrificing one day's salary for helping the victims were definitely humanitarian acts deserving commendation and special recognition.

INEFFICACY OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA

Responsibility of developing the intelligence and maturity of the social mindset generally rests entirely on the white-collared, middle-class intelligentsia. It is not limited to only the intellectuals or political leaders but doctors, lawyers, lecturers, teachers, bank employees, teachers from different cultural/social foundations, the *Bahujan* youth should all take up the leadership of the civil society at Saswad. A majority of them have the will and the inclination to do so. But they have not clearly understood or thought about the action plan for translating the values of a civil society in a caste-bound society. A majority of the people from this class looks upon themselves as caste-free and secular. With their prestige in society because of their education and regular earnings, affording a little free time due to their economic stability, through the medium of literary

organizations and foundations, they have the will and the capacity to lead the civil society. In Saswad too, representatives of this class can be seen.

But with reference to two factors, this class makes the following mistakes

- 1 Persons from this class believe that just like they have become mentally caste free and secular, similarly the middle and lower castes are also becoming caste-free and accepting modern values. So their leadership will naturally come to them.
- 2 The middle class who evolved out of the upper, upper-middle castes thought the progressiveness of their own castes a sufficient qualification for providing their leadership to the new generation & the *Bahujan* society. Rather, they took this assumption for granted. But reality is often very different. That is why when the doctor started reading out the letter of condemnation signed by the Muslims before the crowd, nobody was listening to him. In fact someone tried to jostle him. This incident just goes to show how the caste based progressiveness is so inadequate before a communal mob.

And now a majority of the middle-class too feels 'For how long we should remain secular?' As a result they too are attracted by the Hinduists actions. So instead of arguing and protesting against communalism, this class falls prey to the Hindu communal propaganda. Actually secularism is not religious betrayal but a condemnation of dogmatism, blind faith, inhumanity and a total lack of control. If this class is able to understand this and explain it to the masses then the communalism of the minorities as well as the majority can be opposed. But as this class failed severely in this context, right from the family as an institution, to the educational, professional and cultural institutions, the value of secularism could not spread.

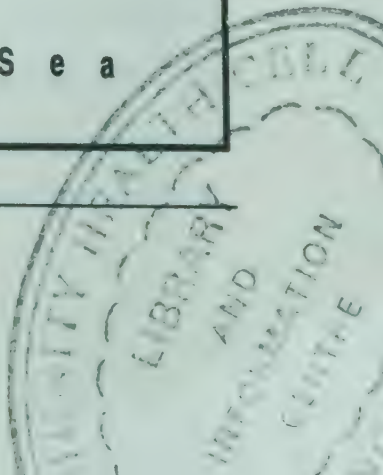
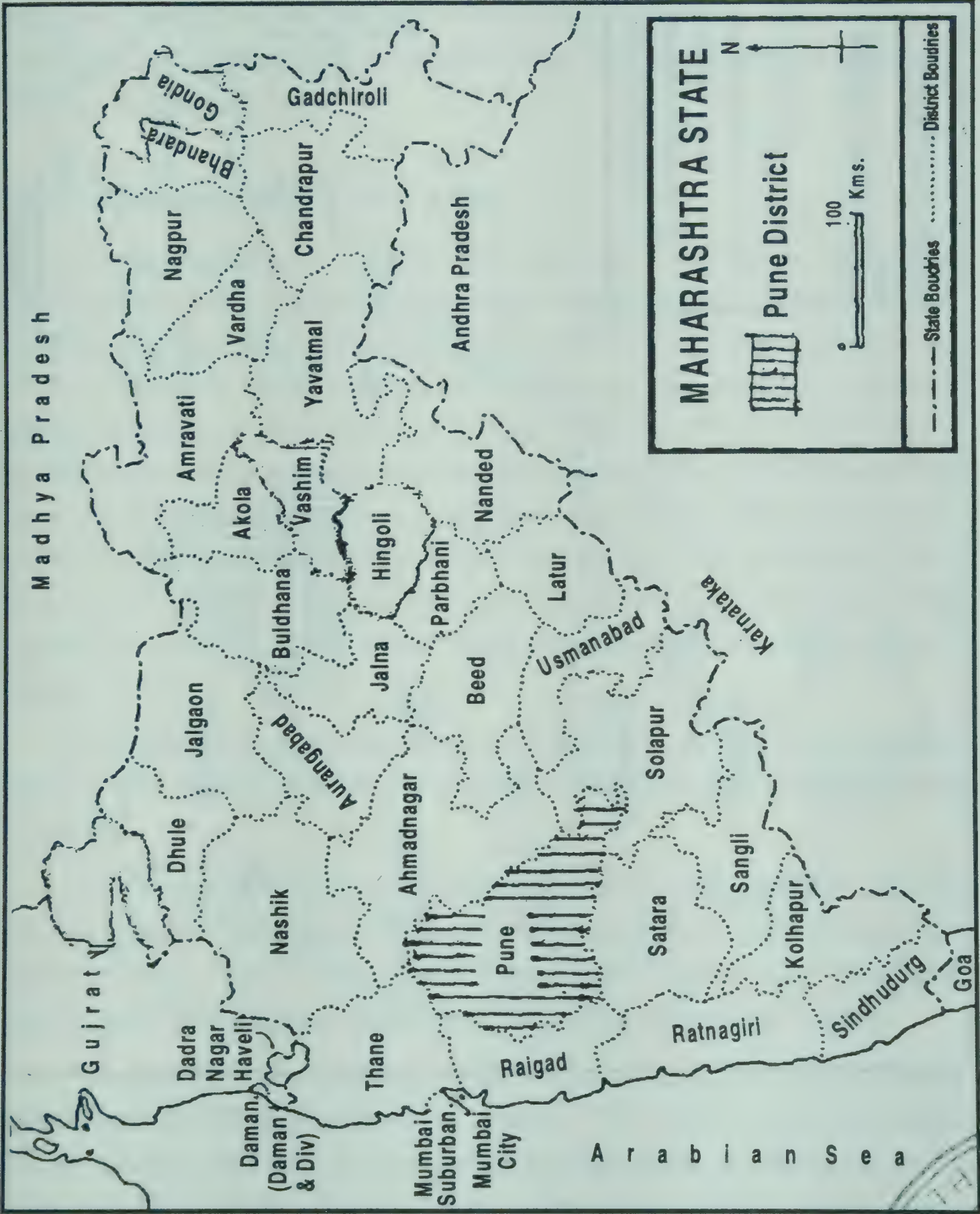
As a result our Government is secular so to speak, while our families, schools, colleges, cultural forums and a majority of the civil

society became increasingly communal. If the white-collared, intellectual class within its available spaces specifies clearly the emotional content of secularism, then communalization of that society can be prevented. The Bhakti tradition, liberal ideology, religion of collective truth, religious concepts of Dr. Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts of truth and non violence, concept of exploitation-free society of Marx and feminist liberal thoughts could be utilized for this. Every citizen of this country has to be able to live in a fearless atmosphere and develop him/her potentials to the fullest. Communalism makes people fearful and suspicious, becomes a big hindrance in accepting 'others' as human beings. This leads to a rift in society. The attitude to settle down in one's own cocoon increases. We cannot look at the 'other' fearlessly. In the struggle for existence every 'other' seems like an enemy and communalist forces taking advantage of such feelings, communalize the entire society. This is what had happened in Saswad. If we pledge that this will not happen, only then can we say that the meaning of the communal attack of 7th Oct. is now clear. The purpose of this Social Documentation is that there should be clarity on this issue.

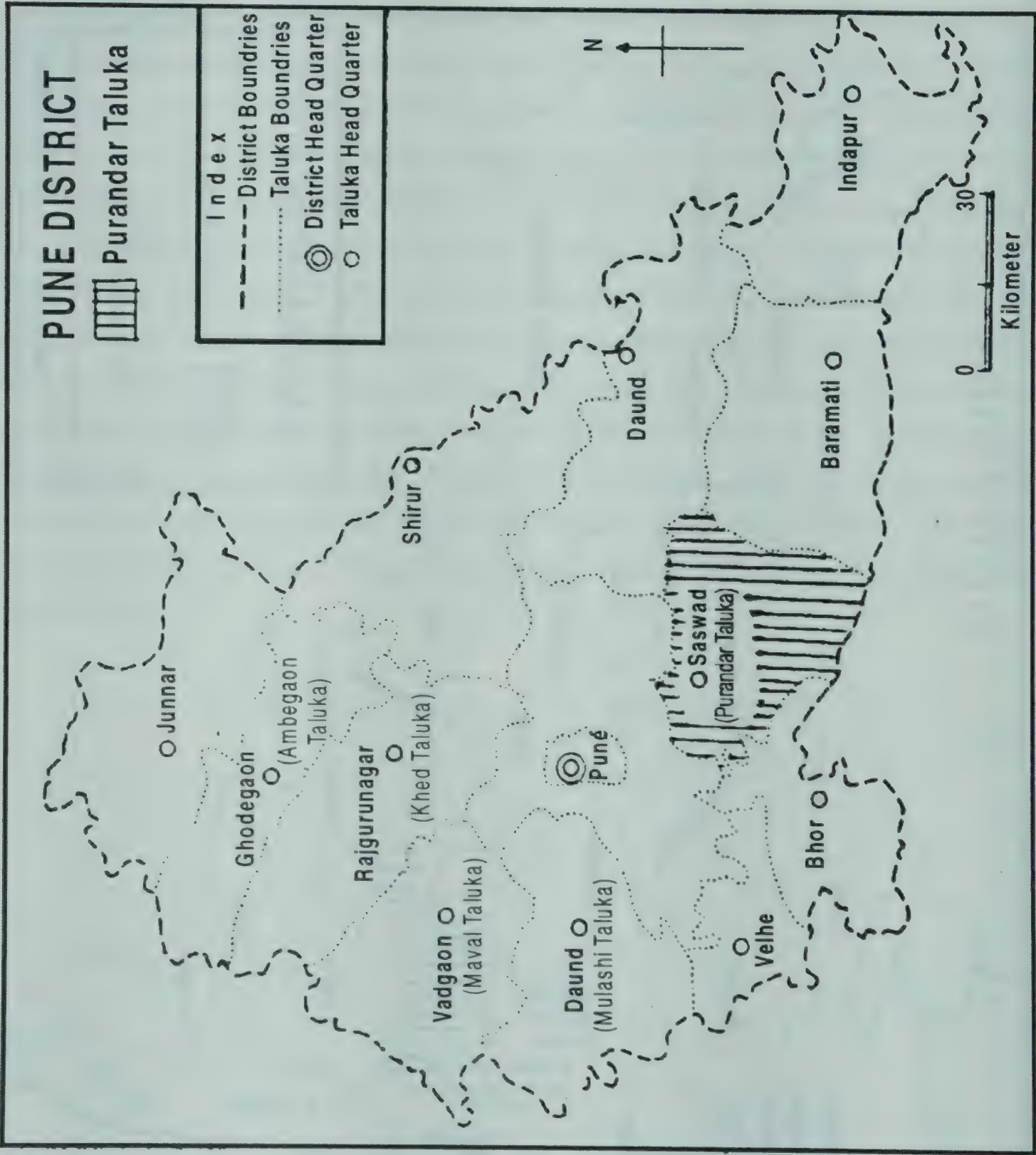
□□□

Annexure 1
Maps

Map showing Pune district in Maharashtra



Map showing Purandar Taluka in Pune District



Annexure 2

Anonymous Circular

The anonymous circular distributed before the communal attack. The entire matter of this circular was printed in saffron colour. The tri-colour and the saffron flag flanked the heading. The circular is printed here without any change.

Hindu Brothers, Be on the Alert!

Hindu brothers of Saswad! The socially treacherous conspiracy planned by treasonous and religious bigot organizations has come to light in the past seven-eight days. Treasonous SIMI activists were staying for several months in the illegally built mosque at the Saswad graveyard. Explosives and weapons harmful to human life were found there. Didn't the citizens of Saswad who visit the place of worship five times a day, know about it? Or are they also involved in this? Do they give their consent for this? Against whom were the explosives going to be used? How come the law protectors of Saswad are inactive while this is going on? What was the Corporation doing when illegal construction was taking place in the graveyard?

It is time to demand answers to all these. In such a situation local Hindu youth should patiently, peacefully and discreetly condemn these activities.

'Riots should take place at different places in the country. Bombs should explode. There should be civil war leading to anarchy. Democracy should collapse.' This is what the Pakistan Secret Agents work for. Hindu youth should be calm and discreet so that all this does not happen.

We appeal to the Muslims of Saswad that just like Abdul Hamid, senior journalist Mujaffar Hussain, scholar U M Pathan, scientist Abdul Kalam, Hamid Dalwai of the Satyashodhak Samaj, King Shivaji's colleagues Daulatkhan, Madari Mehtar, the cannon chief in the battle of

COMMUNAL ATTACK AT SASWAD

Panipat of the Peshwas, Ibrahim Khan, they all uphold the ideals of these men, observe their religion and live happily. Do not justify Laden. To condemn the pro-Pakistani Muslims, the treacherous activities in Kashmir and the treasonous Imam from Delhi indecently advising the Prime Minister of the country; all Hindu brothers join the morcha from the Sangameshwar Temple to the ground opposite the Nagarparishad on 7-10-2001 at 10.00 a.m. Effigies of those indulging in treason shall be burnt. All Hindus and nation-loving Muslims should join the morcha (procession) in large numbers. An appeal to all once again to be peaceful, controlled and discreet.

Jai Shivaji I

Jai Shriram II

Jai Bhavani III

Morcha Venue : To gather at Shri Sangameshwar Mandir, Saswad

Special Notice : Morcha will start at 10.00 a.m.

Annexure 3

Declaration by the Police

Public Declaration (Date : 11-10-2001)

Citizens of Saswad are informed by this circular that within the boundaries of the Saswad Police Station, no illegal weapons, bombs, explosives were found. Activists of the SIMI organization are also not active in the boundaries of the Saswad Police Station.

Citizens should not believe in any type of rumor all should take care to ensure that they do not hamper the law and order situation of the city. If in doubt, do contact the Saswad Police Station on telephone no. 222333. All should note that spreading rumors is a cognizable offence.

Date : 11-10-2001

Signature

(N.S. Bhosale Patil)

Asst. Police Superintendent

Saswad Police Station

Annexure 4

Persons Contacted by the Committee

Aalmas Bagvan
Anil Gadre
Appa Purandare
Arun Palkar's family.
Avinash Bharambe
Chandukaka Jagtap
Dada Jadhavrao, Minister of State, Govt. of Maharashtra.
Deepak Jagtap
Dharmaraj Kolte
Dilip Nikam
Ganibhai Bagvan's family members
Gulshan Attar
Ilahi Bagvan
Kalatai Phadtare, President, Saswad Municipality.
Kiran Jagtap
Madhavrao Sanap, Police Superintendent, Pune Rural.
M. B. Borkar, Tahasildar, Saswad.
Milind Ekbote, Corporator, Pune Municipal Corporation.
Nasir Attar, Journalist
Nitin Bhosale Patil, Assistant Police Superintendent, Saswad
Raosaheb Pawar
Sampatrao Marne
Shrikrishna Newse, Journalist
Shrikant Deshpande
Siddheshwar Kulkarni
Subhashchandra Dange, Police Officer, Saswad.
Sunil Jagtap
Suraiyya Mulani
Umesh Gawli
Vishal Gurav
Waman Jagtap

Annexure 5

Damage Caused by the Attack

**A List of the Shops and Property Burnt/Ravaged at Saswad
by the Communal Attack.**

Sr.	Shops and Property Burnt	
1	Bharat Bakery	
2	Maharashtra Bakery	
3	Regal Watch	
4	Shaharukh General Stores	
5	Classic Tailors	
6	Regal Varieties	
7	Royal Automobiles	
8	Purandar Medical Stores	
9	Aslam Provision Stores	
10	Sana Variety	
11	J. J. Fabrication	
12	Sabir Chicken Center	
13	Boss Men's Wear & Video Shooting	
14	Shops of Daily Consumable Items.	
15	S. T. D. Booth	1
16	Banana Shops	2
17	Pan Stalls	5
18	Garage	1
19	Shop for Furniture & items for religious rituals	1
20	Shop of Bangles and scent	1

Cont ...

COMMUNAL ATTACK AT SASWAD

Sr.	Shops and Property Burnt	
21	Shop of Bangles & stationary	1
22	Bakery & other products	1
23	Bangle shops	3
24	Cassette & T. V. shop	1
25	Plastic & waste Material shop	1
26	Cutlery shop	1
27	Pedal, speakers, light house	1
28	Fruit Stalls	1
29	Mobile Fruit Carts	5
30	Stationary Shop	1
31	Pulling Carts	1
32	Scooters	3
33	Motor Cycle	1
34	Auto Rickshaw	1
35	Mini door Rickshaw	1
36	Houses	7

Part II

For Peaceful Co-Existence

Report of the Sadbhavana Yatra

The minority community had been attacked in Saswad on the 7th of Oct. 2001. There was damage to property and details of this attack have been published in the report of the Fact Finding Committee.

Some voluntary organizations and agencies working in the Purandar Taluka came together after the attack. An incident of this kind had happened for the first time in this region. A meeting was held to discuss what programmes could be organized to comfort the victims and re-establish an atmosphere of peace and harmony. This is how the Purandar Sadbhavana Manch (Forum) was established. Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM), Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, Rashtra Seva Dal, Samata Jan-jagran Kala Manch, Helpo Foundation and Sane Guruji Pratishathan joined hands as partners. The Forum propagated that there should be no discrimination in society based on religion; caste, creed, gender, community and any type of violence must be collectively opposed. Principles of secularism, equality, social justice, freedom, brotherhood, enshrined in our constitution are extremely important and if these principles are flouted and disrespected then the Forum decided that voluntary agencies and organizations would take initiative and act immediately in order to preserve these basic principles. In a way it was established mainly to work against communalism. One Fact Finding Committee was appointed by the Forum to study the event and submit their report, which has been published in the first part of this booklet.

In the meanwhile, with a view to discuss this issue with the people at large, it was decided to organize a Sadbhavana Yatra (Amiability March). The major objective of the Yatra was to uphold the values of

secularism, equality, social justice, freedom, brotherhood, and non-violence and condemn publicly religious bigotry, casteism and communalism. While the minority community was attacked, many rumors had been spread.

The Yatra also aimed to achieve the following objectives

- Verifying the rumors, as also the persons who were involved in this communal attack.

- What were their vested interests?

- Discussing with them how religion is used for exploiting the common citizens.

- Counter the communalist propaganda and Bring out the reality before the public.

It was decided to visit 40 villages in the Purandar Taluka. The volunteers of the Sadbhavana Manch contacted many important agencies & individuals possible from every village like the Sarpanch, members of the Gram Panchayat, Presidents of the Women and Youth groups, eminent citizens and discussed the March programme with them. All consented to having such a programme in their respective villages.

The volunteers of the Yatra were divided in two groups where there were jeeps with sound amplifiers. On entering the town/village, they used to raise slogans, distribute pamphlets and appeals inviting people to attend the public meeting. The meeting comprised speeches, songs and street plays. Book exhibitions, sale of stickers, badges and books used to be organized at the venue of the meeting. In this manner, the two groups conducted the affairs of the Yatra in two towns each daily. Thus starting from 25th February for the next 10 days the Yatra held mass awakening programmes to oppose communalism.

The Sadbhavana Yatra started from Garade, which was extremely appropriate, as the first rumour had spread from there. 'Towards Understanding from Misunderstanding' was the underlined emphasis of

the Yatra. Rumours like 'One Muslim has built a house near the Garade dam which has a basement, he has stored RDX, bombs and weapons and on Dassera the Khandoba Temple of Jejuri, Garade dam, schools and colleges of Saswad are going to be bomb-blasted' had created tension at Saswad. Actually the Sarpanch of Garade, Mr. Gangaram Jagdale had called the Saswad Police and along with other villagers, gone to the house near the dam and ensured that there were no weapons, bombs or explosives. But even then, the effect of the rumor had not lessened. On the contrary, those wanting to create tension and insecurity spread one more rumor that 'the police have said it is a rumour just to cover up their inefficiency'. By spreading this rumour it was ensured that all sections of society would be boiling with fury against the minority community. Similarly, everyone including innocent common men, students, parents, teachers were instigated with rumours like 'Khandoba's Mandir at Jejuri is going to be bombed' and 'Schools and colleges of Saswad' are going to be blasted, etc. The rumour starting from Garade had played a crucial role in the October incident, so the Yatra commenced from there.

At the inaugural function of the Yatra, the Sarpanch of Garade explained the real situation to the gathering and so this pattern was followed in other villages too.. How rumors are used effectively as weapons and how those orchestrating the communal attacks spread them was a point taken up for discussion in the public meetings. People agreed with how the Garade dam rumor assumed large proportions, how something extra got added to it by the laymen. Some other rumours had also been systematically spread just before the communal attack. Some of there were 'one person from Saswad is an activist of SIMI, he was arrested by the police and then he was released on a bail of Rs, 8,00,000/-'. There are three telephone lines in the Saswad graveyard the bill of which come to Rs. 25,000/-. The Delhi/CBI/Punjab police raided near the Garade dam, Osama Bin Laden came to Garade in his helicopter etc. In all the meetings held by the Yatra, it was emphatically told that all these were rumours. An appeal was made to the gathering that before

believing in them we should properly verify them. It was also told that each person should give a thought to the feasibility of whatever one hears. For example, Helicopter flies at a height of 5000 ft. If any helicopter enters the Indian boundary from an outside country's air boundary, the Indian Air Force would surely have blasted it. Similarly if the Delhi/CBI/Punjab police were to raid any town in the Purandar Taluka, they cannot do it without informing the local police. The common people accepted the logical dissection as also the absurd comical element in the rumours. The volunteers of the Sadbhavana Yatra appealed during these meetings that if such rumours are spread in future, let police verify rumors, hold meeting and discuss about them. Most people responded positively to the appeal.

The speeches gave elaborate information on the organizations that are behind such communal attacks and what are their motives. "These fundamentalist organizations with religious dominance are actually interested in maintaining a caste-based and religion-based social order. Those belonging to the high castes & classes kept some low caste & class people exactly where they were in order to exploit them in the name of religion. In order to keep this exploitative system functioning they operate through different organizations. These people now want to teach oral Sanskrit, Vedic Maths, Astrology in the Universities. The stars and the planets above, have no direct connection to the lives of masses. But by giving sanction to teaching astrology in the Universities, they are going to produce Government recognized astrologers. This way they would be destroying the common man's strength to fight against odds and injustice." After hearing this, many in the gathering used to shake their heads in agreement. Many seemed to be simply unaware of the fact that religion and god are used by the Central Government to exploit people.

"The same people keeping their religious power intact for generations together, are going to Ayodhya for building the temple. Nobody is opposed to the building of temples. But no matter how many

people die, how much property is damaged, how many riots take place, the fanatics insist on building the Mandir on the same spot. What could be the reason for their adamanc? It must be some selfish motive. If god is everywhere then what difference does it make where the mandir is built and are the issues of drinking water, unemployment, poverty, corruption, illiteracy, ill health, gender-bias going to be solved if temples are built? If we raise issues of mandir & masjid, our main issues are going to remain unsolved. What are we going to achieve by attacking the minority community of our own Taluka? Instead, we all should unite and raise our voice against those engaging in religion-based politics and concentrate on solving our real issues". This appeal and statement were always well received by people. In the Purandar Taluka the problem of drinking water is extremely severe. And there are other issues too. That is why commoners were seen to be in agreement with the content of the speeches made in the Sadbhavana Yatra.

Those engaged in communal politics use the strategy of false publicity and instigate one group against another. With a view to achieve this target, information on the real situation is systematically withheld and distorted; exaggerated information is purposely reached to the people. During the March, some of these issues were also discussed with examples like the Kashmir issue, Common Civil Code, opposition of King Shivaji to Muslims, Muslim men having four wives, their increasing population, etc. Fundamentalist religious organizations disseminate propaganda that 'thousands of Hindus die in Kashmir'. Most people agreed with the fact that there are 90% Muslims living there and no matter who dies value of death of any human has to be the same. But it was difficult to accept and digest the true facts for the youth who had already fallen victims to the vicious propaganda.

'King Shivaji was actually a secular king. Many Muslims were his serfs and were enrolled in his army. The battles which King Shivaji fought with his own kin are more in number than the ones he fought against the

Muslims. He always treated women with respect and religious monuments found during any war. All this information, which was disseminated during the Yatra, highlighted the fact that King Shivaji was never anti-Muslim. Battles in those times fought between kings, landlords, and serfs were basically economic and not religious. That is why Hindu-Hindu and Muslim-Muslim kings and dynasties fought against each other to conquer maximum land.' This point was also agreed upon by the masses.

'If we are to bring in Common Civil Code, it should bring justice to women' was something emphatically mentioned during the Yatra. 'This is because in our country, women are the victims of many atrocities and they are not treated as men's equals. And even if Hindu men are not legally allowed to marry more than once while the first wife is alive, many have married officially or unofficially and the percentage of these marriages is more than the percentage of marriages.' People used to find this difficult to believe. At such times, the issue of false propaganda of religious fundamentalists was taken up and discussed.

During the Yatra while talking to the youngsters it was realized that the wicked propaganda of religious bigots is successful in a big way. So naturally they were bitter and angry with the minority community. It was realized that it was extremely important to remove the misconceptions of these youngsters and inform them about how the systems of caste and religion came up, how they are being used for exploitation, how religious bigots have to maintain their power and how they achieve their aims, what exactly are the concepts of freedom, equality, secularism, non-violence social justice.

This Sadbhavana Yatra was against the fundamentalism of all religions. Just like we oppose the slogan "जो हिंदू हित की बात करेगा, वही देशपे राज करेगा", हँसके लिया है पाकिस्तान, लडके लेंगे हिंदुस्तान". This was repeatedly told in all the speeches. 'We will always oppose fundamentalism, be it of any religion. Religious fundamentalists prove to be troublesome to their own people (e.g. Taliban). And because we keep fighting among ourselves, in

a way we help our enemy nations. Even if Pakistan is our enemy, the common people of Pakistani are not our enemy because they are also facing many problems just like us'. People agreed on this point in great numbers. 'Dyaneshwar and many saints of his tradition belonging to different castes created spiritual equality. Priests and other religious authorities tortured all those who tried to bring about equality. Today just a few of these fanatics for their own selfish motives are provoking our youngsters. Are we going to allow this to happen? Are we going to forget the tradition of our saints who tried to bring about equality?' This question used to be very well received by adults and elderly who were present for the meeting. 'After the communal attack, Saswad is now registered as a 'sensitive' city in the Government registry and police station. Are we going to allow our Taluka to be ill reputed? 'When asked this question the gathering seemed to be deep in thought. That is why let us take care that such an incident will never take place in future so that the example of Purandar Taluka can be set before the rest of Maharashtra'. people agreed agree 100%.

The Yatra volunteers frequently asked one more question to the gathering.. If the religious and caste hierarchy in our society is unjust to the Dalits and the women; thinks that some persons are superior and some are interior, then should we not think about changing it? This question too used to make the sensitive people uneasy.

Along with the speeches, pamphlets, posters, exhibitions, songs, street-plays; badges and stickers were the other media used in this Yatra. Posters were depicting message of religious harmony and peace. The foundation of all religions comprises peace, non-violence, love, brotherhood and equality. To illustrate this a poster was prepared in which the tree's branches were shown as the different religions and roots as the teachings of them. The other poster depicted names of King Shivaji's Muslim and Hindu warriors. Another poster showed Lata Mangeshkar, Jayant Naralikar, Abdul Kalam, Sachin Tendulkar, Harbhajan Singh depicting contributions of people from different religions towards India's development.

Another poster depicted the plurality of our nation by showing the Taj Mahal, Kutub Minar, Jain Mandir & temples from South India.

Two types of badges were prepared for this Yatra. One had the Indian tri-colour and over it was written 'We will not hate but we will unite the nation'. The other badge had purple and white colours, the white bird as the symbol of peace. The message read, 'My Religion : Humanity. Of the three types of stickers, one carried the message, 'We are all children of the sky; the black soil is our Mother' and 'we are of one caste and one religion'. The other sticker asked the question 'what is the foundation of Indian Nationalism? Freedom, Equality and Social Justice.' The third sticker carried the message, 'We have been together; we will stay together and we will not fight in the name of religion.'

One poster had an illustration of Mahatma Gandhi and the heading read, 'There cannot be a way towards peace as Peace is the only way'. And his statement 'Those indulging in violence cannot be religious' was also printed. Head bands were made with the message 'True Religion Is Only One : Offer Love To The World' printed on them.

The Yatra concluded on the 8th of March 2002 at Saswad. This year the International Women's Day was celebrated with the theme: 'Opposition to Religious Bigotry, casteism and Communalism. Well-known actors, committed to secularism Mr. Nilu Phule and Dr. Shreeram Lagu were present as Chief Guest and Chairperson respectively. Dr. Lagu's presidential speech was thought provoking. He said, "Those participating in riots do not understand religion or god. The morality which does not staunchly oppose irreligious activities is of no use" Nilu Phule said, "We should stop the fire of mistrust and communalism. This is a nation of common people. We are all fighting for keeping it integrated. People should come forward as human beings and not as representatives of different religions, castes, creeds and sects."

Just like many people agreed with the issues raised during the 10 day Sadbhavana Yatra, there were many who opposed. In one village

during the discussion after the public meeting, the crowd raised voices, made a noise and shouted slogans. They were obviously not ready to think and discuss logically and rationally. That is why after the reply was given to one question the crowd gave slogans 'Jai Bhavani, Jai Shivaji, Bal Thakeray Zindabad' and dispersed. Volunteers distributing pamphlets were told 'you are going to create a riot; There will be stone throwing during your programme; you are traitors and impotent.' One female volunteer was told, "If you would have put on the kunku (traditional symbolic red mark on the forehead of a women denoting her marital status), I would have washed your feet and drunk that water". Actually this man's wife must be putting kunku daily but how many times does this man wash her feet and drink water? But this volunteer avoided asking him this question which would have challenged his ego and may be he and his other activists would have got out of control. Youth who have been victims of the fanatically religious propaganda used to argue on many issues while adults and the elderly used to point out some examples, statements from the speech with which they agreed totally.

Many prominent persons participated in the Sadbhavana Yatra. To name a few, Bhai Vaidya, Govindrao Pansare, Dr. Satyaranjan Sathye, Dr. Shreeram Lagu, Razia Patel, R.P. Nene, Dr. Kumar Saptarshi, Prof. Ram Takawale, Shanta Ranade, Varsha Gupte, Dr. Anant Phadke, Vilas Wagh, Lata Jadhav, Medha Tengshe. Right from planning the event to its concluding ceremony Nirmala Sathe, Anwar Rajan, Maneesha Gupte and Dr. Ramesh Avasthi were actively involved.

This Yatra was for creating goodwill about each other, strengthening the voice of secularists, proving that humanity can raise its voice against religious fanatics, giving confidence and solace that the common people are against religious bigotry and violence, lighting the lamps of peace and non-violence in the minds of people and finally promising to all the activists and volunteers that the forthcoming era would be of equality and unity.

Organizations Comprising the Purandar Sadbhavana Manch

RASHTRA SEVA DAL

This 60 year old organization works throughout the nation. The year 2002 is its Diamond Jubilee Year. It is working in 14 villages of the Purandar Taluka. Nationalism, Democracy, Socialism, Secularism and Scientific Temperament are its guiding principles and they are propagated using different mediums. Shakha and Sanskar workshops for teenagers, study circles and activist training camps for youth blood donation camps, lectures to eradicate superstitions, lecture series, mass awakening programmes through street plays. Seva Dal runs libraries at a few places in the Purandar Taluka.

Rashtra Seva Dal
C/o Raosaheb Pawar
Purandar Mudranalaya, Saswad,
Taluka Purandar, District Pune,
Pin - 412 303.
Phone (02115) 253653.

MAHILA SARVANGEEN UTKARSHA MANDAL (MASUM)

In 1987 at Malshiras (Taluka Purandar) MASUM was established which had a broad base of people's participation. MASUM with its feminist perspective proclaims democratic functioning and freedom, equality, social justice, secularism are value of utmost importance to it. It works in the areas of women's saving groups, health (Sadaphuli Centre),

family counseling center to handle issues of violence, development of agricultural wealth (Krishi Dhan Development Project) Ranpakhare and Bharari are groups working with children and in Pune there is a treatment Centre Called Tarang, again for children. The organization has now started its work with men also.

MASUM

At Post Malashiras (Bhuleshwar)
Taluka Purandar, District Pune.
Phone (02115) 262167.

Pune Office

Dr. Ramesh Avasthi

MASUM

41-44, B-1, Kubera Vihar,
Gadital Hadapsar, Pune 411 028.
Phone 020 - 26995625/33
Fax 020 - 26811749
Email - masumfp@vsnl.com
Website - www.masum-india.org

SAMATA JAN-JAGARAN KALA MANCH

This art forum active since 1994, was registered as a Public Charitable Trust in social issues and provide training for street plays are its 'chief activities. Dowry deaths, AIDS, discrimination, inequality between men & women, unemployment, superstitions, ban on liquor, vaccination etc. are issues handled by the Forum. It has also held mass awakening programmes through the medium of songs.

Raju Inamdar

Samata, Jana-Jagaran Kala Manch,
At Post Parinche, Taluka Purandar,
District Pune.

SANE GURUJI PRATISHTHAN

This Foundation established in 1993 works for social awakening and education. Organising camps for farmers, the unemployed, cultural meets are some of its activities. At present a project based on the lines of Sane Guruji's Antarbharati titled Bharatimay is being implemented by the organization.

Sane Suruji Pratishthan
C/o Ganesh Tak,
Mahadwar Road, Jejuri,
Taluka Purandar, District Pune,
Pin 412 303.
Phone (02115) 253653.

HELPO FOUNDATION

This organization established in 1987 was registered at the international level in 1991. Initially its work was in the Haveli Taluka of Pune District. From 1996 it is working in the Purandar Taluka. Hygiene, health, vocational training, tuitions for children, adult education, watershed development, etc are the projects implemented by the organization.

Sanjeevani Jagtap
Helpo Seva Kendra,
At Post Dive, Taluka Purandar,
District Pune.
Phone (02115) 238123.

Pune Office
C/o Sanjay Patange
5 Archana Corner, Salunkhe Vihar Road,
Pune 411048.
Phone (020) 26832232, 26831566.

KASTURBA GANDHI NATIONAL MEMORIAL TRUST

Mahatma Gandhi laid the foundation of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust in 1945. This trust has followed the code of discipline, observed restraint advocated by Mahatma Gandhi and deidicated itself to the noble and creative task of service to the rural women and children for the past 56 years. Saswad is the principal centre of the trust in Maharashtra.

Shobhana Ranade

Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust,

At Post Saswad, Taluka Purandar, District Pune,

Pin 412 304.

Phone (02115) 222327.

Purandar Sadbhavana Manch

Some voluntary agencies and organizations working in the Purandar Taluka came together and held a meeting. What could have caused the incident, what precautions to take to prevent communal conflict in future and also how to ensure that the citizens do not fall prey to the vicious fundamentalist propaganda.

The outcome of these meetings was the establishment of the *Purandar Sadbhavana Manch*.

Following are the organizations comprising the *Purandar Sadbhavana Manch*.

Rashtra Seva Dal

Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsha Mandal (MASUM)

Samata Jan-Jagaran Kala Manch

Sane Guruji Pratishthan

Helpo Foundation

Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust